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Community College Latino Male Student Engagement: A Qualitative Research Study

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College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

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Abstract

According to Saenz and Ponjuan (2009), "Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline" (p. 54). Despite a steady increase of Latino students enrolling over the past several decades, the problem remains that Latino male student persistence and completion rates are not keeping up proportionally with other student population groups (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006). The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to understand how Latino male students describe their educational experience within the community college system, and provide recommendations for educational practitioners to improve programs and services that support Latino male student persistence and completion. This phenomenological study's conceptual framework focused on the following attributes related to the Latino male student, their influences including family, culture, and society as well as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement perspectives. The research study concluded with the following key influence and engagement perspectives for educational practitioners to grapple with when designing programs and services that support Latino male student success at the community college level:

(a) Guidance is necessary for Latino male students who have varying levels of preparation upon entrance into their community college level studies.

(b) There is a great need to have more supportive voices in young Latino male student lives.

(c) Community college personnel must come alongside Latino male students to provide a clear pathway, assist with navigation of the institutional system, and offer information, resources, and services necessary to empower and obtain success.

Keywords: Latino males, community college, educational goals, persistence, completion, influences, engagement, student success

Dedication

I dedicate my research and this dissertation to my God, with a thankful heart for the great empowerment He has provided throughout my doctoral journey. I thank Him for the opportunities, insights, persistence, and courage to step out in faith and pursue understanding regarding Latino male students' experiences within the community college system. Through His grace, educational practitioners are now empowered to implement the wisdom that has come forth out of this research study to successfully engage and serve Latino males students with excellence as they seek to attain their educational goals. I look forward to the next twenty-five years of serving Him as an advocate and higher education as a servant leader, supporting and advancing this target population as they engage and persist through their community college experiences.

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my research topic, conceptual framework, and study's purpose; and Dr. Barbara Calabro, who pushed me to engage in the most relevant and current research around my topic of interest. I want each of you to know that your comments and feedback made my work better, and for that I sincerely thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are 51 million people living in the United States who are of Latino origin (United States Census Bureau, 2016a). In addition, according to Vasquez Urias (2012) "Latinos are the largest ethnic minority in the United States and are projected to be the largest ethnic group by 2040" (Guaracha, 2014, p. 197). From 1996–2012, Latino students' higher education enrollment has more than tripled with an increase of 240% (Krogstad & Fry, 2014), however despite these gains the United States continues to experience a significant Latino education crisis (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Of these college-going Latino male students, 71.3% attend a public, 2-year college (United States Department of Education, 2016). Although the participation of Latino male students in public 2-year colleges is higher than all other postsecondary educational institutions, there continues to be a struggle in facilitating success for this student population (Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007; Perez & Ceja, 2010). After the first year of enrollment at the community college level, 12.9% of Latino male students leave without returning, and by year two 35.2% have either left without return or are no longer enrolled (United States Department of Education, 2016). A total of 41.1% of Latino males either leave college without returning or are no longer enrolled after three years (United States Department of Education, 2016), constituting a significant number of students that are not receiving a certificate or degree, and who are not attain their educational goals (Perrakis, 2008; Vasquez Urias, 2012). Beyond the limited research regarding men of color within the community college system, trends regarding Latino male persistence and completion continue to raise significant concerns for educational practitioners. According to the Digest of Education Statistics (2010), "12% of Black, 14.6% of Latino, and 18.7% of Native American men graduated from a community college in 3 years, compared to 22% for White, 24% for Asian, and 27% for international men"

(as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 174). The success rates of the target population for the present study, as noted in the preceding percentages, are unsettling even when considering Latino male students who have successfully transferred or are attending college to obtain additional skills, a certificate, or a degree. This trend for the nation's fastest growing demographic group, projected to comprise nearly 30% of the United States population by 2040 (United States Census Bureau, 2008), is highly concerning.

Introduction to the Problem

In a 2011 College Board report titled *The Educational Experiences of Young Men of Color*, six pathways after high school were described that students can take: (a) enrollment in postsecondary education, (b) enlistment in the United States Armed Forces, (c) employment, (d) unemployment, (e) incarceration, and (f) death (Bush & Bush, 2004; Bush & Bush, 2005; Lee & Ransom, 2011; Nevarez & Wood, 2010). The data presented in the report showed that men of color are overrepresented in the latter three of these pathways (Harris & Wood, 2013; Harris & Wood, 2014a; Harris & Wood, 2014b). Latino male students are struggling to keep up with their female and other underrepresented minority counterparts in educational pursuits and workforce preparation (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). According to Aud, Fox, and Ramani (2010), "Latina females are twice as likely to receive a postsecondary degree as their Latino male counterparts" (as cited in Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013, p. 83).

While high school gaps in education continue to close, there is a continuing concern related to community college student enrollment, persistence, and completion, particularly the rates for minority students (Kane, 2004). With a vanishing Latino male student population (Banchero, 2010; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009), the need to understand their experiences in the community college system are essential. Identifying key attributes and signs of awareness that

support persistence and completion of educational goal attainment are crucial. This trend of low completion rates from Latino male students could undermine a number of social roles such as income earning potential, involvement in civic obligations, a skilled workforce, and economic productivity and growth (Mortenson, 2006; Sum, Fogg, & Harrington, 2003). In addition, this trend could prove to be harmful to Latinos seeking happiness (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2008) as well as those desiring to pursue the American dream, aspiring for social and political mobility, or competing and succeeding in a changing economy (Kleinfeld, 2009). As the Latino population continues to grow and expand for decades to come, they become even more critical as essential contributors to the United States' trained workforce as well as economic and political drivers in the global economy.

History, Background, Context, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

As educational practitioners, it is important that engagement within the community college system is explored directly with Latino male students–gaining perspective through the targeted population's own voice. Educational practitioners and researchers are turning their focus toward identifying effective outcomes for student success, particularly for men of color, in the community college system (Bush & Bush, 2010; Flowers, 2006; Harper, 2009; Harris & Wood, 2013; Harris & Wood, 2014a; Harris & Wood, 2014b; Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015; Sáenz, Bukosi, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013; Strayhorn, 2012; Vasquez Urias, 2012; Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2015; Wood, 2013; Wood & Hilton, 2012b; Wood & Ireland, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2013). In addition, there is national attention regarding student success due to former President Barack Obama's initiative known as My Brother's Keeper (White House, 2014), that addresses "persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential" (as cited in Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2015, p. 22).

In addition, according to Harris and Harper (2008) "disparities in enrollment, attainment, and engagement constitute most of what is known about men at community colleges…make[ing] the exploration of gendered questions necessary" (p. 26). Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, and Rodriguez (2013) point out that when "gendered and racialized trends are compounded with the state of Latino males in higher education, the course is clear: research attention on Latino male college students is needed" (p. 83). This qualitative research study gathers valuable data directly from Latino male students to explore their engagement experiences within the community college system. Understanding influences such family, culture, or social as well as engagement perspectives such as behavior, emotion, and cognition may identify areas of focus and further develop supportive services needed for Latino male students to succeed.

History. There are a number of disparities related to Latino male student integration, engagement, and success within higher education. Educational practitioners need to understand the influences and motivational drivers of their Latino male students, as attempts are made to offer instructional and supportive services that assist with educational goal attainment (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; O'Brien, Mars, & Eccleston, 2011; Perna, 2005). Researchers have not explored the full potential of engagement perspectives from a multidimensional perspective, involving behavior, emotion, and cognition (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). There is still a lack of understanding regarding the contextual attributes that are having the most influence on Latino male student engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Critical race and interactionalist theories as well as involvement and engagement theories abound, but the breakdown and examination of Latinos and/or male students are often not presented in the data. In addition, much of the literature attempts to be overarching regarding engagement or student

success attributes, often limiting in the depth of applicability that educational practitioners can utilize in the field.

Background. There are currently three educational platforms of note urging educational practitioners to focus on increasing student access and success as well as assisting students with educational goal attainment. The Lumina Foundation (2011) is advocating for quality higher education. The Obama Administration (2009) challenged institutions of higher education to increase the number of baccalaureate degree holders in the United States. A number of national and state education initiatives, such as the California Community College's Student Success and Support Program (SSSP), are demanding growth in student success indicators at all levels of education. These educational platforms have two primary goals: (a) developing opportunities to obtain relevant workplace skills and access to lifelong learning, and (b) building competencies for a multicultural global economy. "Each of the individual-level outcomes result in collective implications for the promotion of social equity, pluralistic ideals of democratic citizenship, as well as economic outcomes for regions where diverse college graduates reside" (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012, p. 50). With an increasing Latino population, it is critical that Latino male students are actively engaged in the community college system in order to be a part of the trained workforce as well as economic and political advocates that the United States needs now and in the future.

Context. Community college systems need to become proficient in addressing issues of persistence and completion for Latino male students as this ethnic minority becomes the largest ethnic group as well as the community college student base in California. There are a number of direct impacts that employability of Latinos in the workforce are having on the United States' long-term trajectory of the economy, and community colleges must identify the key attributes

that are influencing Latino male students' persistence and completion; as well as student success and educational goal attainment. Much of the current research shows the importance of providing Latino male students with supportive and academically rigorous experiences in high school in order to adequately prepare for college, however many Latino male students to not follow the traditional pipeline from high school to the community college. Current educational practices and policies that facilitate the development of supportive relationships between Latino male students and their peers, faculty, and staff have significance not only in engagement, but retention and completion within the community college system.

Conceptual framework. This qualitative study analyzes attributes such as influences from family, culture, and society as well as community college engagement related to behavior, emotion, and cognitive perspectives of Latino male students. Latino male students can provide understanding of persistence and completion signs or patterns that lead to student success and educational goal attainment. The participation of Latino male students at the community college level needs further exploration through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), in order to provide additional understanding regarding persistence and completion outcomes related to student success. The reason behind the success or failure of Latino male students is still unclear. While one could project that greater income generation over a lifetime, higher levels of job satisfaction, better health conditions, civic engagement, and longer life expectancy could be likely outcomes of educational attainment for Latino males (Perna, 2005), asking them directly why they are interested in community college short-term trainings, programs, certificates, or degrees would allow educators to understand their motivations and experiences.

Statement of the Problem

According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009), "Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline" (p. 54). Despite the steady increase of Latino students enrolling over the past several decades, the problem remains that Latino male student persistence and completion rates are not keeping up proportionally with other student population groups (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006). If Latino male students continue to struggle and do not keep up with their female counterparts or other underrepresented minority groups, the long-term effects could undermine a number of social roles such as becoming productive citizens and family members as well as contributing to the overall societal demand of a trained workforce in the United States. In addition, this trend could prove to be harmful to Latino males seeking to pursue the historical lifestyle known as the American dream or aspiring to obtain hope for their future (Storlie, Moreno, & Agahe Portman, 2014). With the most significant stagnation or decline in enrollment, persistence, and completion in higher education, it is critical that educational practitioners understand Latino male students' motivations and experiences in attaining their educational goals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the Latino male students' experience in the community college system. This information was collected from the lived experiences of Latino male students through examination of family, culture, and social influences as well as exploration of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement perspectives. Within higher education, few studies have exclusively address issues relating to Latino male students, and even less research designs include this target population at the community college level (Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh, 2004; Greene, Marti, & McClenney, 2008;

Hall & Rowan, 2001; Harris & Harper, 2008; Perrakis, 2008; Wood, 2012a; Wood & Hilton, 2012b; Wood & Palmer, 2013; Wood & Vasquez Urias, 2013; Vasquez Urias, 2012). In addition, much of the literature on engagement and student success is currently based on quantitative research, at the 4-year university level, and limited on ethnicity and gender differentiations. Lastly, there is a strong theoretical dependence on Vincent Tinto's Critical Race Theory (1975; 1987; 1993; 1997), regarding underrepresented minority experiences within education. Therefore, discovery of identifiable signs or patterns within the educational experience at the 2-year community college level as well as exploring areas of concern or suggestions related to retention and persistence of Latino male students in the community college system are necessary.

The Research Question

The research question for this phenomenological study is: How do Latino male students describe their educational experience within the community college system? The concepts of student persistence and completion were explored through Latino male student influences and engagement perspectives within their community college experience. The study provides recommendations and suggestions for educational practitioners that may improve programs and services as well as support persistence, completion, and overall success of this target population. In order to maximize student success, educational practitioners must understand what influences and engages Latino male students, recognizing signs or patterns that produce student success, and identifying program or service strategies that work for this target population.

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Proposed Study

Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) review of theoretical perspective on persistence and completion, indicate that "the theories emphasize 'a series of academic and social encounters, experiences, and forces…portrayed generally as the notions of academic or social engagement or the extent to which students become involved in (Astin, 1993) or integrated (Tinto, 1993) into their institution's academic and social systems' (p. 425)" (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 16). According to Aguayo, Herman, Ojeda, and Flores (2011) as well as Alvarez (2014), the concepts related to student persistence, achievement, and educational attainment can be analyzed through a number of non-cognitive attributes. Therefore, educational practitioners must understand what drives Latino male student engagement, recognize the signs or patterns that exist within student engagement, and then develop strategies that work to engage them to maximize student success.

Rationale. Increasingly, the evidence suggests that programs and activities such as first-year seminars, learning communities, service-learning, study abroad, and other experiences with diversity, internships, and capstone projects promote student engagement and support educational gains as well as persistence (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008; Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014; Waiwaiole, Bohlig, & Massey, 2016; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). While these high impact practices have historically been utilized more prominently at the 4-year college or university level, community colleges are more intentionally implementing these strategies to assist students with engagement and perspective transformation into the institution of higher education environment. Key areas of focus for student persistence includes engagement (Kuh, 2006), extracurricular activities (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993), a comprehensive system of initiatives that support students (Kuh, 2005a; Wang & Grimes, 2001), high-impact activities, and student

validation through enabling, confirming, and supporting students inside and outside of the classroom (Rendón, 1994a).

Therefore, if student engagement is to be attained, the understanding of what motivates a student and to what extent behavioral, emotional, and cognitive energy is devoted to the academic experience is of great interest (Astin, 1993; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Highly involved students have *observable* traits, behaviors, or signs such as devoting a considerable amount of energy to studying, spending time on campus, participating in student organizations, and engaging with faculty and peers. In addition, the ability of the student to identify with the institution is critical. For men, the most common reason for a lack of persistence in their educational experience is passivity or boredom (Astin, 1993), an element of emotional engagement that Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) have identified as a reactive response to the classroom environment. As educational practitioners focus on both the pre-college student identity (Zamarripa, Lane, Lerma, & Holin, 2011) as well as involvement and engagement patterns of Latino male students, shifts in perspective and programming can adjust, with the end goal of producing greater numbers of Latino male students experiencing success and obtaining their educational goals.

Significance. This research may assist educational practitioners with better understanding the role of gender when promoting equitable outcomes for Latinos (Davis, 2010; Harper, 2004; Harper & Harris, 2010), by targeting input from the Latino student voice (Zurita, 2004); soliciting familial, cultural, and social influences (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Nuñez, 2011; Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Tinto, 1975; Tinto 1993); and behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement perspectives (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004) that assist with educational goal attainment. These findings can serve to better inform educational practitioners

of the supportive services, classroom pedagogies, and on- and off-campus spaces that drive Latino male students toward successful outcomes (Guiffrida, 2006).

Specifically, this study explores the vanishing Latino male syndrome (Banchero, 2010; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). As enrollments for minority students continues to grow in higher education, the persistence and completion data for Latino male students remains stagnant and therefore, the gap continues to increase. This research can assist educational practitioners with understanding the role of gender when promoting equitable outcomes for Latinos, targeting input from the Latino student voice (Zurita, 2004) as it relates to persistence and completion outcomes for Latino male students. In addition to gender, ethnicity can play a key role in predispositions toward the community college experience. Pre-college circumstances such as academic rigor in high school, educational background and support from family members, financial aid, and socioeconomic status are critical to historically underrepresented students. Lastly, signs or patterns of perception from Latino male students such as behavior, emotion, or cognitive engagement with family dynamics, working status, entrance timing, and multi-institutional attendance have negative impacts on student engagement and success (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Freeman & Huggans, 2009; Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, Brock, & Orr, 2010; Jimenez-Silva, Jimenez Hernandez, Luevanos, Jimenez, & Jimenez, 2009).

Definition of Terms

The following definition of terms are central in providing a solid foundation for this study's targeted population and conceptual framework:

Race. Race is the classification of a group of people based on their physical traits, ancestry, genetics, or social relations. This study focuses on qualifying Latino candidates from a classification of students who have physical, ancestral, genetic, or social ties to Latin America.

Ethnicity. Ethnicity is the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition. This study focuses on the familial, cultural, and social influences of Latinos, a fact confirmed by each potential candidate, based on their cultural traditions linked to a Latin American country.

Influences. An individual's identity comes from familial, cultural, and social influences in their childhood, adolescence, and adult phases of life (Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011). Areas such as student motivation (Schuetz, 2008), instructional or supportive service practices of the institution of higher education or educators (Kuh, 2001/2002), cultural or structural roles of the institution (Porter, 2006), social and political context in which student engagement takes place (McInnis, 2003; McMahon & Portelli, 2004; Yorke & Knight, 2004), and impact on environmental attributes of the student such as family background and economic status (Law, 2005; Miliszewska & Horwood, 2004) are all critical influences in a student's educational experience. As educational practitioners, understanding the influences of family, culture, and society for Latino male students is essential to engagement and attainment of student success.

Engagement. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006), "at the intersection of student behaviors and institutional conditions is *student engagement*" (p. 8). Behavioral engagement has to do with student conduct or being on-task. Emotional engagement is focused on attitudes as well as interests and values (Palacios, 2014; Wood, 2014). Cognitive engagement emphasizes motivational goals and self-discipline as it relates to the learning environment (Boekarts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Zimmerman, 1990). Student engagement continues to evolve as a concept in higher education, with the potential for structural systems and design to be implemented that support student success (Connell, 1990; Finn & Rock, 1997).

Persistence. Hamrick and Stage (2004) claim that "race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background and parental educational all affect students' educational aspirations" (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). In addition, Feldman and Newcomb (1969) state that "peer groups are an important influence on student persistence and can help students gain independence, offer emotional support, provide opportunities for cross-culture interactions, and offer validation outside of academics" (as cited in Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015, p. 164). According to Heys and Wawrzynski (2013), "engaging men as peer educators is a promising practice that 'puts men in an ideal context for involvement' (p. 201) and research suggests that college men grow significantly from this experience in learning domains such as cognitive complexity, intrapersonal development, and interpersonal development" (as cited in Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015, p. 174). In addition, interacting with faculty and staff positively impacts persistence as well as a number of other measures of student success. Therefore, a student's efforts as well as their level of engagement in educationally purposeful activities can have a cumulative effect on their ability to continue through the duration of any difficult situation in the community college experience and ultimately persist until they attain their educational goals.

Completion. Community college students have different goals and outcomes than their counterparts at 4-year institutions of higher education. These educational goals include skills upgrades, earning a local institutional certificate, earning a state-recognized certificate, passing an industry-recognized certification, earning an associate's degree, or preparing for transfer to a 4-year college or university. Earning college credit is linked to long-term cognitive, social, and economic benefits for the student. These benefits are passed on "to future generations, enhancing the quality of life of the families of college-educated persons, the communities in

which they live, and the larger society. Whereas college was once considered an option for a relatively small percentage of the adult population, this is no longer the case" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 105). Therefore, earning some college up to an associate's degree has an impact on an individual's postgraduate outcomes.

Educational goals. Each student has a personal pathway to their success. Therefore, educational goals vary significantly based on the personal or professional targets of the student. For some it is acquiring skills, knowledge, and abilities to pursue a career of their dreams; for others a retooling of their skills, seeking a promotion or career shift, or a completely new career pathway. That being said, if a student lays out clear goals for their educational journey then the appropriate benchmarks and direction can be given to guide and support the student.

Student success. From the field, research has shown that when educators place high expectations for student coupled with supportive services and accountability measures to support goal attainment, then student success is typically the outcome (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). According to Blose (1999), "students tend to adjust their behavior and comply, regardless of their prior academic history, to the academic expectations of the environment" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006, p. 67) and when accompanied with advice regarding degree completion and the common expectations needed in order to succeed, the results are worthy of consideration. In addition, Rendón (1995; 1999) "found that 'validation'–an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by faculty and other agents of socialization in and out of the classroom–fosters student success, particularly for historically underserved students" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006, p. 67). Together both the individual and institution can strive to align with this common goal aimed at student success.

Limitations and Delimitations

There were a number of limitations to this study, including timing and selection of candidates in order to start the data collection process. Data is collected from Latino male student participants who were on the verge of completing their educational goals, and so the challenge of competing priorities such as graduation applications and job searching may be an issue. In addition, I had some limitations regarding analysis around familial, cultural, and social influences as well as engagement attributes related to persistence and completion of Latino male students' educational journey as I interviewed participants; particularly in synthesizing the data in order to provide recommendations for student success.

Limitations. The timing of this phenomenological research study is situated at a difficult juncture in the students' educational process. Data collection from Latino male students who intend to complete their educational goals in the existing semester or within the next semester were at a transitional phase in the educational process. As students completed their educational goals–skill building, certificate, degree, and/or transfer–there were many competing interests for their time such as institutional breaks or holidays, graduation applications, and job search and start-up efforts. Therefore, in order to capture their participation in the data collection process during the end of one semester and beginning of another, a gift of $50 cash was provided to incentivize Latino male students to participate. In addition, several methodological and theoretical limitations contributing to predictability or explaining persistence and completion influences and attributes of engagement throughout the Latino male students' educational journey were anticipated that they may produce potentially inconclusive results. These limitations can give some context to the research's expected findings, ethical issues, and potential recommendations.

Delimitations. The following were delimitations of this research study: students currently attending the participating California community college district (a single college campus), 12-15 Latino male students (specific ethnicity, gender, and size of group), community college students who were 18 years of age or older (no dual enrollment high school students), students able to communicate in English (interviews were not conducted in other languages or translated), and students who intend to complete their educational goals in the existing semester or within the next semester (skill building, certificate, degree attainment, and/or transferring)– Fall 2016, Spring 2017, or Fall 2017.

Summary

The primary interest of this study is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of Latino male students' and their community college experience. The literature surrounding this phenomenon is presented in Chapter 2. The methodology and plan for data collection is outlined in Chapter 3. The process of data gathering, analysis, and synthesis is presented in Chapter 4. Finally, the recommendations and suggestions for future research are represented in Chapter 5. The results of this research obtained a greater sense of meaning regarding the Latino male students' experience and understanding their engagement perspectives that allow for persistence and completion of educational goals. In addition, this research study can inform policy and practice within California community colleges.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Institutions of higher education can provide opportunities for personal growth, skills enhancement, and social mobility that benefits society as a whole (Bowen & Bok, 1998). This purpose aligns well with the mission of community colleges–institutions positioned to serve as a gateway to various educational goals and that provide opportunities for a wide array of students. California community colleges focus on equitable access and success for *all* students in their service area (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2016b).

Introduction to the Literature Review

According to the United States Census Bureau (2016a), there are 51 million people living in the United States who are of Latino origin, and it is projected that in the next 40 years half of the country's total growth will be attributed to the Latino population. This projected population increase will make Latinos one-fourth of the total population by 2050 (Llagas & Snyder, 2003). Latino student enrollments are increasing within institutions of higher education, 18% of all 18- to 24-year-olds in 2012 compared to 11% in 2006 (Krogstad & Fry, 2014), with a notable majority of these students enrolling at 2-year institutions (Fry & Lopez, 2012; Kurlaender, 2006; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). Between 1996–2012, Latino student enrollment more than tripled with an increase of 240%, outpacing increases among Blacks (72%) and Whites (12%), and in 2012 the 18- to 24-year-old Latino high school graduates surpassed that of Whites, by 49% compared to 47% (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). Despite this growth in the Latino population and increase in higher education enrollments, the United States continues to experience a significant Latino education crisis (Gándara & Contreras, 2009) regarding persistence and completion; degree and certificate completion percentages for Latinos are alarmingly lower than their counterparts.

The opening: Latinos in the community college system. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), the majority of high school students expect to enroll in some form of higher education, however only 15.8% of Latino students followed through with this commitment in 2013. In addition, "undergraduate enrollment is projected to increase 14 percent from 17.3 million to 19.8 million students between 2014 and 2025" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), but Latino student enrollment is expected to only grow 2.3% during this same time period. "Parents' expectations are a strong direct indicator of Latino [students']…predispositions for college…[and] parent and peers seem to influence both student enrollment (Perna & Titus, 2005) and persistence decisions (Bank, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990)" (as sited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 22). Student success is often achieved when families affirm student choices and encourage persistence toward their educational goals; this is especially important for historically underrepresented students and men of color (Clinedinst, Merisotis, & Phipps, 2004; Gutierrez, 2000; Harris & Wood, 2013; Harris & Wood, 2014a; Harris & Wood, 2014b; Jeynes, 2003; Jeynes, 2011; Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005).

The study topic: Involvement and engagement. In Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) review of theoretical perspectives on persistence and completion, they concluded that "the theories emphasize 'a series of academic and social encounters, experiences, and forces…portrayed generally as the notions of academic or social engagement or the extent to which students become involved in (Astin, 1985) or integrated into (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 1993) their institution's academic and social systems' (p. 425)" (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 16). Therefore, the concepts of student persistence through to completion can be viewed as the depth to which a student's engagement within the institution

is established and solidified. In order to maximize student success, educational practitioners must understand what drives student engagement, recognize the signs or patterns that exist with engagement, and then develop strategies that work to engage students.

According to Astin (1984), cultivating student involvement as an institution includes exposure to the right subject matter and learning by "attending lectures, doing reading assignments, and working in the library" (p. 520). Therefore, when resources are brought together to support student development such as physical facilities like classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and computer labs; human resources including faculty members, counselors, and support staff; and fiscal resources (financial aid, endowments, grants, on-campus jobs) then students are well positioned to thrive throughout their educational journey (Astin, 1984). A major component of student involvement and successful transitions into the higher education environment rests with faculty. Faculty who are able to transition from traditional content delivery and teaching techniques to more of an observation and facilitation strategy within the classroom, *seeing* what students are actually *doing* in class, allows for maximization of student involvement and learning (Astin, 1984). In addition, student services counselors and staff that are consistently monitoring and gauging student progress (Astin, 1984) as well as providing intrusive support services helps to increase student involvement.

Latino students who take part in educationally purposeful activities stimulate their perceptions of the institutional environment, are able to begin transformational work around personal, social, and cultural values that influence the concentration of their time and energy (Astin, 1993). Institution of higher education that support students through culturally sensitive resource allocations, educational policies, programs and practices, and structural features that mirror the Latino student's background prior to college are more successful in assisting students

of color with this transformative work. For example, ensuring that the campus environment is welcoming and culturally appropriate, utilizing a first-year student experience platform, providing high-touch academic supportive services, providing opportunities for peer interaction and support, and fostering learning that is responsive to student behavior are all key components of a successful educational experience (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

According to Kuh (2008b), students should engage in at least two high-impact activities during the first-year experience. Some examples of high-impact activities include (Kuh, 2008b; Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015):

- First-year seminars and experiences emphasizing critical inquiry and collaborative learning that allow students to create a solid foundation for academic study.
- Learning opportunities such as course materials and assignments as well as guest presenters and mentor and that expose men of color to socially constructs of masculinity and common pressures men face.
- Development of common intellectual experiences that involve a set of required courses in a learning community that allow students to develop a network of peers.
- Learning communities that allow students to learn across disciplines and grapple with real-world scenarios.
- Courses that emphasize critical thinking, communication, literacy, and inquiry.
- Collaborative assignments and projects that deploy problem-solving and team-building skills, while developing an appreciation of different perspectives.
- Global perspective of learning regarding culture, life experience, and a worldview of others as well as experiential learning with community partners that allow students to apply their learning in a real-world context.

- Internships providing direct experience in a work setting related to career interests as well as capstone courses or projects that provide application of learning.

Many California community colleges are integrating these types of strategies into first-year experiences in order for students to establish a solid foundation of learning and personal development as part of the SB1456 Student Success Act of 2012 (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2012). In addition, within the California community college system there are colleges designing learning communities that utilize cohort enrollment with a pre-determined sequence of courses (Scott-Clayton, 2011) as well as block scheduling to expedite enrollment and the instructional sequencing of courses (Radford, Berkner, Wheeless, & Shepherd, 2010); strategies that develop common intellectual experiences and accelerate students through to completion of their educational goals. Lastly, regional internships are being put into place in order to support student experience development and application of real-world scenarios coupled with their academic regimen of studies as well as job placement hubs and coaches that are assisting with connection efforts to part-time and full-time employment in the student's field of study (Central/Mother Lode Regional Consortium, 2016; West Hills Community College District, 2010).

The context: Vanishing Latino male syndrome. According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009), "Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline" (p. 54). Despite the steady increase in Latinos attending college over the past few decades, Latino male enrollment, persistence, and completion is not keeping up proportionally with other student population groups (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006). This vanishing Latino male syndrome at first glance sounds counter intuitive to historical trends where men in higher education have traditionally outnumbered women. Policies such as Title VII and IX were

established specifically to support additional integration of females in higher education. After several decades of focus on women in higher education, this shift to a more nurturing environment for women has resulted in some unanticipated affects regarding male students. "Latino males are losing ground in accessing higher education–relative to their Latina female peers" (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 55). As male students struggle to keep up with their female counterparts in education and often drop out of school in favor of entering the workforce, this causes major concerns for educational practitioners and institutions of higher education (Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, Brock, & Orr, 2010; Jimenez-Silva, Jimenez Hernandez, Luevanos, Jimenez, & Jimenez, 2009).

The significance: Latino male student identity. This research can assist educational practitioners with better understanding the role of gender when promoting equitable outcomes for Latino male students, targeting input directly from the Latino male student voice (Zurita, 2004); soliciting familial, cultural, and social influences (Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Tinto, 1975; Tinto 1993); and engagement perspectives that assist with educational goal attainment. These findings can serve to better inform educators of the supportive services, classroom pedagogies, and on- and off-campus spaces that drive Latinos toward student success outcomes (Guiffrida, 2006).

Through this research study, student identity is examined through the lenses of familial, cultural, and social influences. It is critical that educational practitioners understand student identity and how influences such as family, culture, and society support or derail Latino male students upon entry into higher education. This foundational understanding of the Latino male student's identity provides the lens from which to examine engagement from behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives that lead to persistence and completion of educational

goals. According to Astin (1984), a "student's chances of dropping out are substantially greater at a 2-year college than at a 4-year college" (p. 524), so it is imperative that community colleges establish a firm understanding of what attributes of engagement support student success.

According to Tinto (1975; 1987; 1993), students must first separate from their former associations in order to transition into new membership. To assimilate into a higher education environment, students must distance themselves from family and friends (Tinto, 1993) to "*incorporate* or adopt the normative values and behaviors of the new group, or college" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 11). The influences established with one's family and community through a student's formative years, as well as cultural identity prior to entrance in a college setting, are filled with: parental encouragement or discouragement regarding education, support or barriers from friends, and financial planning or lack thereof. These key pre-college perspectives greatly influence persistence and completion outcomes. Therefore, an intentional study to explore this transformation into the community college setting and better understand the Latino male students' points-of-view are critical to the future of community college programming and understanding what is needed in order for student success to occur.

In addition, according to Kimmel and Messner (2007) as well as Connell (1995), "masculinity is a socially constructed concept. Simply stated, men are socialized or taught, the meanings, values, and behaviors that are associated with masculinity. Moreover, men are rewarded for performing masculinity according to societal expectations, and punished for not doing so" (as cited by Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015, p. 63). Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, Brock, and Orr (2010) found that men of color are reluctant to seek "academic, personal, or financial assistance while in college because they viewed seeking help as contradictory to how they were socialized to express masculinity, notably by exhibiting vigor,

independence, and resilience" (as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 179). Harris, Wood, and Newman point out that,

> while on one hand, schooling and academic learning is socially constructed as a feminine activity; on the other hand, popularity and status for men are earned through the accumulation of wealth, physicality, being tough, and being independent. Success in college is dependent, in part, on cultivating healthy interpersonal relationships, seeking help when needed for academic and other challenges, and proactively participating in class discussions and activities. Yet, these behaviors are often assumed to be contradictory to the messages about masculinity that are ingrained in men during the early stages of their gender socialization. (2015, p. 65)

This social programing of males heightens the importance of this study, seeking to link societal pressures around normative culture and gender roles that influence student success and completion outcomes for Latino male students.

Furthermore, Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, Brock, & Orr (2010) as well as Wood and Essien-Wood (2012) highlight "the ways in which men of color in community colleges are challenged by pressures to fulfill the masculine role of breadwinner and the effects it had on their engagement in academics" (as cited in Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015, p. 64). According to Levant and Kopecky (1996) "Latino men are culturally socialized toward dominance, self-reliance, status achievement, objectifying sexual attitudes, aversion of homosexuality, and avoidance of femininity" (as cited in Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013, p. 85). As a result, Latino male students are more likely drop out, be influenced by peer pressures, or seek financial gain over educational pursuits due to their sense of personal

responsibility and obligation to their families (Ingram & Gonzalez-Matthews, 2013; Palacios, 2014).

Lastly, Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, and Rodriguez (2013) describe a *Machismo paradigm*, suggesting that "Latino masculinity is indicative of certain behaviors that can negatively impact men's navigation in school" (as cited in Palacios, 2014, p. 166). *Machismo* is typically associated with aggression or chauvinism (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 201; Saez, Cassado, & Wade, 2009). On the other hand, *caballerismo* recognizes contributions such as nurturing, family-centered, noble, and chivalrous qualities of the Latino masculinity (Arciniega et al., 2008; Sáenz et al., 2015). "Though Latino cultures consistently hold males to the expectation to be good men, the manifestation may reflect varying degrees of both the negative traits associated with traditional machismo or the positive traits of caballerismo" (Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015, p. 167). Sáenz et al. (2013) found three primary areas of concern regarding Latino male students: "(a) pride, or machismo, triggers men to admit emotionality only in rigid ways, (b) pride and fear prevent men from seeking academic support, and (c) cultural and familial expectations of getting a job and earning money as a marker of manhood all serve to 'pull' Latino men away from their studies and make dropping out the easier and more viable option" (p. 82). However, Vasquez Urias and Wood's (2015) research findings challenged this "belief that men, specifically Latino men, do not value their education or are not self-motivated due to their perceptions that school is not a place suitable for males…[and that] their competitive nature to work harder towards accomplishing their goals" (p. 30) was a motivating factor. The fact remains that higher levels of support for Latino male students are needed in order to validate their efforts and presence within the classroom and on campus, in order to eliminate negative ideas, feelings, or values associated

with academic anxiety, racial inferiority, or traditional gender roles (Garcia, 2010; O'Neil, 2008; Rendón, 1994b; Rodríguez, 2014; Wood, 2014a).

The problem statement. According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009), "Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline" (p. 54). The vanishing trend of Latino male students could produce long-term implications on society, such as the productivity of its citizens, families, and workforce (Banchero, 2010; Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Perna, 2004; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Despite the steady increase of Latino students enrolling over the past several decades in higher education, the problem remains that Latino male student persistence and completion rates are not keeping up proportionally with other student population groups (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006). In order to understand the vanishing Latino male students' challenges and opportunities, it is critical to fill this gap of understanding in the literature and provide educational practitioners with recommendations for program and service improvements that support educational goal attainment and student success.

The organization. This qualitative research study attempts to formulate practical applications for both Latino male students and institutions of higher education serving Latino males in order to effectively engage them within the community college system. Examination of influences from family, culture, and society as well as engagement perspectives of behavior, emotion, and cognition were presented, synthesized, and then further analyze with new insights into the community college Latino male students' experience. Finally, areas of the study that require further attention and research were also recommended.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework chosen for this research study is one focused on social psychological theory, with a strong commitment to identifying educational structures and designs that support Latino male student persistence and completion as well as overall student success. Theories about culture, involvement, and engagement provide the lenses through which observation of student success for the Latino male student occurs. In isolation, these foci are far less significant than when examined together. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006), "at the intersection of student behaviors and institutional conditions is *student engagement*" (p. 8). Exploration of familial, cultural, and social contexts of the Latino male student allow for deeper insights into the challenges and barriers that confront students at the community college level and their sense of engagement within the institution. Bush, Bush, and Wilcoxson (2009), Freeman and Huggans (2009), Harper (2009), and Ray, Carly, and Brown (2009) emphasize the need for institutions of higher education to "be proactive in designing and implementing effective programs, services, policies, and practices that meet students' needs and leverage students' assets" (as cited by Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 180). In addition, Wood and Vasquez Urias (2012) found that "African American, Hispanic, and Native American men who attended community colleges reported significantly higher levels of academic integration and greater levels of satisfaction with their major or course of study, quality of education, and the worth of their education" (as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 180), compared with men of color who attended private college, university, or for-profit educational institutions.

Three engagement perspectives. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), there are three engagement perspectives that are critical to the make-up of a student's identity and life experience: (a) behavior, (b) emotion, and (c) cognition. Behavioral engagement is

centered on student conduct or being on-task. Emotional engagement is focused on attitudes as well as interests and values (Palacios, 2014; Wood, 2014). Cognitive engagement emphasizes motivational goals and self-discipline as it relates to the learning environment (Boekarts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Zimmerman, 1990). Student engagement continues to evolve as a concept in higher education, with the potential for structural systems and instructional service designs to be implemented that support student success (Connell, 1990; Finn & Rock, 1997).

Behavior. Behavioral engagement can be defined in three ways (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 62). First, positive conduct such as adhering to classroom norms or rules as well as an absence of disruptive behaviors (Finn, 1993; Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl, 1995; Finn & Rock, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Kahu, 2013). Second, involvement in the learning process and execution of academic tasks with a focus on persistence through efforts put forth, the asking questions, or contribution within a class discussion (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Finn et al., 1995; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Third, participation in school activities such as clubs, sports, study groups, or the student body association (Finn, 1993; Finn et al., 1995; Johnson et al., 2007; Kahu, 2013).

Emotion. Emotional engagement can be defined as student reactions within the classroom setting, including: boredom, sadness, anxiety, interest, or happiness (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Some researchers have explored emotional engagement through the measurement of emotional reactions to the institution of higher education or faculty (Lee & Smith, 1995; Stipek, 2002). Some researchers have conceptualized emotional engagement as an element of identification with the institution (Tinto, 1993; Voelkl, 1997). Finn (1993), Johnson et al. (2007), and Kahu (2013) identified a sense of belonging or the feeling of being important to the institution as well as the sense of value or an appreciation

for the successful outcomes a student is producing for the institution. Eccles-Parsons et al. (1983) described "four components of value: *interest* (enjoyment of the activity), *attainment value* (importance of doing well on the task for confirming aspects of one's self-schema), *utility value/importance* (importance of the task for future goals), and *cost* (negative aspects of engaging in the task)" (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 63). In addition, Palacios (2014) suggests that "the more validating experiences are given to men by faculty, specifically when experiencing high stress levels, the more likely a higher value of degree utility will be reported…specifically, the greater men perceived that school was a worthwhile endeavor; the more likely they were to persist" (pp. 165–166). Lastly, Csikzentmihalyi (1988) defines flow as "a subjective state of complete involvement, whereby individuals are so involved in an activity that they lose awareness of time and space" (as cited in Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 63). This definition of flow provides a depiction of an individual who is emotionally engaged at a high level.

Cognition. Cognitive engagement focuses on the investment of learning, and stems from the literature regarding learning and instruction through self-regulation or being strategic in an individual's educational approach (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). One set of cognitive engagement definitions emphasizes the psychological investment to learning, with an interest in going beyond the established expectations as well as having a preference of curricular challenges within their instruction (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992). For example, Connell and Wellborn (1991) conceptualized cognitive engagement to include "flexibility in problem solving, preference for hard work, and positive coping in the face of failure" (as cited in Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 63). Another set of cognitive engagement definitions focus on an inner quality and investment in the psychology of learning.

For example, Newmann et al. (1992) defined cognitive engagement as the "student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, mastering, the knowledge, skills or crafts that the academic work is intended to promote" (p. 12).

Analysis of institutional conditions, redesign opportunities, and current structures that exist within the community college system need to be examined in order to more effectively support Latino male student success in light of these three engagement perspectives (Castillo et al., 2006; Fry & Lopez, 2012; Llagas & Snyder, 2003), however this is outside of the current research study's scope. This research study's conceptual framework examines effective engagement strategies for Latino male students from these three key perspectives: behavior, emotion, and cognition.

Conceptual framework connections. There were a number of linkages between various attributes in this qualitative research study that can be derived from historical theories and the assumptions about probable outcomes. Tinto (1975; 1993) explores attrition and social integration theories regarding minority student success in higher education. Kuh (2001a; 2001b; 2003; 2005a; 2005b; 2008a; 2008b; 2008c) and Astin (1996) focus on interactionalist theory of student engagement and involvement. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) examine the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives of engagement.

Table 1

Conceptual Framework Links with Theory and Attributes of Interests

Theory	Attributes	Expected Outcomes
Critical Race & Interactionalist	Familial, Cultural, & Social Influences	Identify key levels of involvement and engagement for student success based on attributes such as first-generation college graduate strategies and supports, high academic parental expectations, ability to assimilate to the community college system, limited workforce expectations, and the ability to develop a supportive network of faculty, staff, and peers.
Involvement & Engagement	Behavioral, Emotional, & Cognitive Perspectives	Understand the definition of student success as well as educational goal attainment trends for Latino male students through exploration of behaviors, emotions, and cognitive perspectives related to the community college system.

Throughout this qualitative research study, attention to *signs* or behavior, emotional, and cognitive engagement attributes regarding Latino male students were analyzed, providing data that allows educators to better understand this minority population. In addition, this study provides the Latino male student voice regarding engagement perspectives as they relate to persistence and completion of educational goals.

Signs. The body of evidence available from the literature points to the potential for signals, indicators, and symptoms that can point community college educators toward persistence and completion attributes that support the overall success of Latino students. Student engagement within environments that are culturally sensitive and respectful can assist with focus and persistence toward completion of educational goals, limiting barriers that are experienced along the journey toward student success.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

There is a need for educators to grapple with issues of equity as they relate to engagement patterns of Latinos entering institutions of higher education. According to the United States Department of Education (2016), 71.3% of Latino males have their initial postsecondary experiences in community colleges, serving "as a critical and primary pathway into postsecondary education for these men (Bush & Bush, 2010)" (as cited in Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 512). Therefore, community colleges are well positioned as gateways to various educational goals, with numerous possibilities regarding upward mobility and economic prosperity for students regardless of their age, race, or socioeconomic background. That being said, according to the Digest of Education Statistics (2016), only "14.6% of Latino [males]…graduated from a community college in 3 years" (as cited in Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 175). The literature suggests a number of disagreements related to Latino male students as they attempt to integrate themselves within the educational institution, acquiring instructional and supportive services that aide them in their educational aspirations, and change their economic positioning (Campa, 2010; Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; O'Brien, Mars, & Eccleston, 2011; Perna, 2005). In addition, the need for transparent, structured programming that supports student success and transitions into the workforce are essential (Van Noy, Trimble, Jenkins, Barnett, & Wachen, 2016).

The vanishing Latino male syndrome. According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009; 2011), further research regarding the vanishing Latino male syndrome is needed in order to provide a better understanding of the role of gender in promoting equitable outcomes. As enrollments for minority students continue to grow in higher education, the literature regarding retention,

persistence, and completion data for Latino male students has remained fairly limited. Some research suggested that "psychological outcomes such as satisfaction, sense of belonging, stereotypes, degree utility (the value students place on their academic endeavors), and academic focus (also referred to as action control) lead to enhance persistence (Perrakis, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012; Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012; Wood & Hilton, 2012a)" (as cited in Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 513). However, in order to effectively understand the Latino male student perspective, understanding from this student population is needed to inform educational practitioners of potential student success strategies. The last thing needed in higher education is to lose this ever increasing segment of the population. Attempts to find the reasoning behind this vanishing population of students before they fully disappear from the higher education spectrum is paramount.

Latino student voice. Latino male students must have an opportunity to voice their experience (Zurita, 2004) at the community college level. In order to understand cultural perspectives and influences (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993) of Latino male students as well as their patterns of persistence and completion, educators need to become more aware of engagement signs and attributes. Institution of higher education design, structure, supportive services, and classroom pedagogies need to be informed by this type of understanding in order to drive Latino male students toward successful outcomes and educational goal attainment (Guiffrida, 2006; Williams, 2014).

Familial, cultural, and social foundations. Often there are linkages between Latino students' academic experiences and performance that are directly associated with their familial and cultural upbringing as well as perspectives of education and workplace aspirations (Campa, 2010; Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Mason, 2008; Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Wood,

2012b; Wood, Hilton, & Lewis, 2011). For example, parental and peer support are critical to self-efficacy development leading to student success (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). Cultural or familial background in higher education can have detrimental outcomes if external influences are unable to support Latino male students, such as guidance in the overall higher education experience if a first-generation student or the feeling of cultural dissonance and the ability to assimilate to the institution's culture of learning (Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu & Rodriguez, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016a; 2016b), the majority of high school students expect to enroll in some form of higher education, however in 2013 only 15.8% of Latino students followed through with this commitment.

First-generation college students. Two out of five Latino students come from families whose parents have less than a high school education compared to only one out of five White students (Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005). First-generation college student priorities regarding education are (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 21):

> More heavily influenced by the nature and amount of financial aid awards, perceptions of the amount of homework required, and being able to live at home and to work while going to school. They are also more likely to delay enrollment after high school, attend 2-year institutions, attend part time and work full time, and live off campus, all of which contribute to their being less likely to get involved with campus organizations and to have more difficulty adjusting to college. (Choy, 2001; Pascarella, Wolniak, Cruce, & Blaich., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996; Terenzini et al., 1994; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004; Warburton, Bugarin, & Nuñez, 2001)

On top of these priority areas, Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998), Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling (1996), and York-Anderson and Bowman (1991) all point toward first-generation students having "less well developed time management and other personal skills, less family and social support for attending college, less knowledge about higher education, and less experience navigating bureaucratic institutions" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006, p. 21). Therefore, for educators it is important to consider the fragilities of first-generation students and their unique needs for successful engagement in their higher education pursuits.

Parental expectation. In addition, Tinto (1975) believed that "the quality of relationships within the family and the interest and expectations parents have for their children's education" (p. 100) are crucial to students' educational attainment and persistence in college. The more parental advice, praise, and expressed interest in their student's college experience tends to demonstrate a stronger level of long-term persistence. High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) points out that students who had a male family member completed college, specifically their fathers, were three times more likely to declare a college degree as their educational goal (McCarthy & Kuh, 2006). These attributes show a great need for additional Latino male students to achieve their educational goals, thus changing the future for generations to come.

Institutional assimilation. As institutions of higher education continue to strive for successful completion outcomes regarding Latino male students, they often fall short (Castillo et al., 2006; Fry & Lopez, 2012; Llagas & Snyder, 2003). There appears to be a mismatch between the student's family culture and the institution of higher education culture–known as *cultural mismatch*–linked to academic difficulties found among Latino male students (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Foster, Lewis, & Onafowora, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Researchers have

used the idea of cultural mismatch to help explain the dynamics with ethnic minority student success or failure; finding that students who feel culturally aligned with their institution of higher education are more motivated (Hudley & Daoud, 2008) and more academically successful (Warzon & Ginsburg-Block, 2008). In the end, greater attention to institutional assimilation of Latino male students in order to better understand and serve this minority population are critical to the long-term success of both the community college system as well as Latino male students.

Workforce expectations. Financial affordability of higher education is a key consideration when determining when and where to pursuing educational opportunities by Latino male students. According to Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, Brock, and Orr (2010), men of color in the community college system "believed it was important to earn money to take care of their families while they were enrolled in college. They recognized that doing so had negative consequences on their academic achievement. Yet, they still felt compelled to prioritize work above school because they saw work as core to their identities as men" (as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 179). With significant opportunities for financial aid, there are equal financial responsibilities that students and their families must weigh out when entering into such contractual obligations. Choy (2001), the Institution of Higher Education Policy (2001), and Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005a) have found that students who work:

> Fifteen or fewer hours were more likely than students who worked more to attend for the full year, suggesting that working more than 15 hours may negatively affect persistence. On-campus, or work-study, employment is more often associated with student success, such working on campus provides a channel of communication to students and helps students use the education system effectively, and also is linked with higher transfer rates

for community college students. (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 25)

Therefore, perspectives need to be analyzed by each student regarding balance of work obligations versus educational pursuits as well as the length of time to completion. While financially a student may view working a full-time job necessary to cover their educational costs or support the family, careful financial planning in order to limit financial expenditures as well as producing a lean personal or family operating budget could result in higher focused, more condensed time on task, and lower stress levels while in pursuit of their educational goals (Santiago, 2011).

Peers, faculty, and staff networks. Current educational practices and policies that facilitate the development of supportive relationships between Latino male students and their peers, faculty, and staff have significance not only in student engagement, but also in persistence and completion for Latino male students. Furthermore, in- and out-of-class experiences were crucial to the overall educational experience of Latino male students; engaging them to persist and complete their intended educational goals. The networks of people that Latino male students encounter at the community college level were vital to their overall experience within the institution of higher education.

Peer support. According to Astin (1993), "peers are 'the single most potent source of influence' (p. 398), affecting virtually every aspect of development–cognitive, affective, psychological, and behavioral" (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 42). The following are peer interactions that stimulate learning (Astin, 1993, p. 385):

- Discussing coursework with peers,
- Working in groups on projects,

- Tutoring peers,
- Participating in intramural sports,
- Membership in a fraternity or sorority,
- Discussing racial or ethnic issues,
- Socializing with different racial or ethnic group members,
- Participating in student body government, and
- Participating in weekly student club or organizational activities.

Therefore, in order to engage students where they are, peer relationships and a space for both formal and informal interactions to occur and develop were essential to the sense of belonging, assimilation to student life, and ultimately involvement with the institution of higher education (Phinney, Torres Campos, Kallemeyn, & Kim, 2011; Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014; Waiwaiole, Bohlig, & Massey, 2016; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Research of Methodological Issues

Both relativism and phenomenology methodologies are evident in the literature related to Critical Race and Interactionalist theories (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 1997). The cultural mismatch often present in Latino male students' experiences (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Foster, Lewis, & Onafowora, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995) as well as perspectives of involvement and engagement (Astin, 1996; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Kuh, 2000; Kuh, 2000/2001; Kuh, 2001a; Kuh, 2001b; Kuh, 2002; Kuh, 2003; Kuh, 2005a; Kuh, 2005b; Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2008b; Kuh, 2008c; Kuh & Love, 2000) in the institution of higher education could be very telling, but are often left out or limited in scope within research studies. When examining Latino male student success, concepts such as family, culture, and society that are foundational to the development of the student's identity prior to entering the community college

system are important in order to understand the full context of the experience. Once the meaning of this foundation is established, then researching the transformative process through exploration and analysis regarding shifts in behavior, emotion, or cognitive perspectives of the Latino male student can occur. In light of Latino male student community college experiences, educational practitioners need to know what assisted or limited persistence and completion toward the educational goals of their Latino male students. Engagement analysis for the Latino male student population as well as 2-year college level research is limited, and a qualitative phenomenological study can provide greater insight regarding the essence of the Latino male student experience. Three of the primarily methodological issues for this study to be highlighted are: (a) researcher bias, (b) sample size, and (c) transferability.

Researcher bias. In order to limit researcher bias, cultural anthropological theory is utilized when framing the research questions. In addition, an emphasis on gender and culture sensitivity in developing interview questions, executing interview sessions, and formulating discussion points were exercised. Lastly, in order to limit the concern that interpretative research is influenced by researcher biases or assumptions, this study approached the group of Latino male student participants is assistants with an interpretation of familial, cultural, and social foundations from their Latino background as well as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives that lead to persistence and completion of their educational goals through interviews and a member checking process.

Sample size and transferability. Qualitative research studies tend to have small sample sizes that are not generalizable. In addition, the target population of Latino male students is not often a subset of data in the body of engagement or student success research. The in-depth nature of phenomenological research interviews involving 12–15 participants in this research

study, from a single California community college site, produced discussion and recommendation points regarding the Latino male student population that were not all transferable. However, this research study allowed participants to provide valuable meaning through interpretation and validation of the Latino male students' experiences as well as signs within the data that were useful to highlight for educational practitioners across institutions of higher education. The qualitative nature of the research process has limits to broad conclusions, but can be applied by educational practitioners in a general sense. There is a need for further research in order to apply findings in other geographic areas, other demographics of Spanish-speaking populations, or both Latino and Latina students within the community college system.

Critical research issues. The social perceptions of ethnicity and race are undeniably tied to a number of political factors. As such, the evaluation of data in critical research must not develop findings or recommendations in isolation of the political climate. In addition, the categorizing of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives that could be applied to a number of student success outcomes can make the research findings inconclusive or lean toward defaults such as familial, cultural, or social explanations rather than an institutional design or structural issue. There is potential to mislead the audience if a full description of the value assumptions and/or practical constraints are not present. Critical research observations must provide the complexity of the issues and concerns within the research in a thorough manner in order to ensure credibility or dependability of the findings presented.

Synthesis of Research Findings

With a wide array of definitions around engagement, there were various constructs for study and analysis. In addition, engagement literature is often conceptually duplicative, but lacking in consistent findings due to differentiations in the definition of engagement (Fredricks,

Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Therefore, the approach to researching current literature was to identify patterns and analyze literature themes that span across different conceptual frameworks.

Student engagement. A large number of student engagement studies were conducted from a quantitative perspective with national research data sets that do not always breakdown race or ethnicity at a level that provides understanding for the Latino male student (Kuh, 2000; Kuh, 2000/2001; Kuh, 2001a; Kuh 2001b; Kuh, 2002; Kuh, 2003; Kuh, 2005a; Kuh, 2005b; Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2008b; Kuh, 2008c; Kuh & Love, 2000). In addition, the qualitative research regarding student involvement and engagement has predominately been at the 4-year college or university level of higher education; limited community college or Latino male students focus (Astin, 1996; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 1993). Therefore, this phenomenological research completed at the community college level examines the transformation of Latino male students with engagement from behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), and then links these findings to persistence and completion outcomes that produce student success or educational goal attainment.

Student identity foundations. Latino male students grapple with their level of engagement as they balance the pursuit of their educational goals with other life demands. The family dynamics of interest in this study consist of first-generation college student status and parental expectations regarding higher education. The cultural dynamics of interest in this study consist of a possible cultural mismatch between life before community college and the higher institution experience. The social dynamics of interest in this study consist of work obligations and peer support influencing engagement in the Latino male students' educational goals.

Understanding Latino male student experiences. Community colleges have the unique opportunity to provide access and success for Latino male students pursuing their educational goals within higher education. Once Latino students enter the community college system, engagement with instruction and supportive services that assist students with persistence through to completion of their educational goals were critical. Institutions of higher education that are culturally sensitive and relevant to Latino male students can more successfully support Latino male student aspirations, thus aligning with the Latino male students' needs and providing programming that leads to student success. However, without the ability to gather in-depth interview transcripts and analyze data specific to the community college system, a cultural mismatch is likely to continue (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Foster, Lewis, & Onafowora, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995) and cultural dissonance or engagement perspectives that do not lead to student success may persist for Latino male students. Understanding Latino male student experiences can greatly inform policy and practice within the community college system. Critical issues such as the vanishing Latino male student and student success need further exploration (Banchero, 2010; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011).

Critique of Previous Research

Traditional theories of retention and involvement, according to Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora (2000), while "useful in providing a foundation for the study of persistence, they need to be taken further, as much more work needs to be done to uncover race, class, and gender issues (among others) that impact retention for diverse students in diverse institutions" (p. 151). It is imperative that educational practitioners understand how students engage with their institution of higher education. Making sense of Latino male student needs for student success and navigate their college environment can be a challenge. There is a "greater potential to reveal

aspects of the organizational structure that support and hinder student success" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 104) when educational practitioners hear the Latino male students' voice directly, rather than assumptions of what is working or not.

In addition, understanding the familial, cultural, and social differences of a community college level Latino male student and how these attributes relate to engagement, persistence, and completion are limited. Overall, the focus on Latino male students as a sub-group is limited in the existing literature. There is a huge potential for further discovery and understanding of historically underrepresented groups, particularly the Latino male student. Nora (2003) as well as Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2005) have pointed out,

> the emphasis on external push/pull attributes outside of college (e.g. family), student finances, validating experiences with both faculty and peers, peer contexts, sense of belonging, and campus climate issues in relation to reenrollment in an intuition–significant omissions from the original Tinto model (as cited by Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012, p. 56)

that need more thorough examination in regards to student success strategies and designs that supports Latino male students. A major theoretical concern by Bush and Bush (2010), Campa (2010), Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2014), Mason (2008), and Wood (2012a) is the overreliance of Tinto's (1993) model of student integration to explain Latino student outcomes, particularly due to a social integration and the applicability for students who do not reflect a traditional college student profile, such as adult learners, commuters, and community college students.

Literature limitations. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), research studies to date have "not capitalized on the potential of engagement as a multidimensional construct that encompasses behavior, emotion, and cognition" (p. 83). There were still a number

of unknowns regarding the contextual attributes that have the most influence on student engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Thus, conceptual clarity and practical reality struggle with inefficiencies in providing meaning and comprehensive reform that can be utilized in educational practice (Fredricks et al., 2004). Engagement literature is messy and voluminous, and in an effort to provide an overarching umbrella for student success attributes, the literature is often limited in the depth of applicability that is useful and purposeful for educational practitioners to implement in the field.

Educational practitioners need to understand familial, cultural, and social "identity theory and utilizing it in relation to creating learning environments that produce equitable achievement outcomes for all college students" (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012, p. 73). Literature across fields of study, often points out that high performing organizations typically find that culture plays a major factor in success (Collins, 2001; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005b; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tierney, 1999). Therefore, examining culture in light of familial and social identity could be extremely informative for institutions of higher education as it relates to student success initiatives (Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011) as well as instructional programming. When educators embrace the educational goals of their students, and strive to provide each student who enters the institution of higher education with engagement strategies that take into consideration precollege characteristics such as first-generational status, socioeconomic status, and inadequate academic or financial preparation (Becker & Andrews, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2004; Heller, 2004; Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005), there are bound to be a number of challenges that could be mitigated during academic pursuits with more understanding regarding the student's experience within the organization.

Summary

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to not only enhance individual skills, but to also foster opportunities for achievement in social and economic mobility (Bowen & Bok, 1998). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016a; 2016b), equitable access and success for Latino male students is still an area of concern within the community college system. With only 15.8% of Latino high school students committed to pursue their postsecondary education goals, there is an ongoing need for understanding both individual and institutional level opportunities and concerns to assist with this persistent equity gap. This research study identifies attributes from Latino male students that can drive engagement from their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives. Then the goal is to share these findings with educational practitioners in a meaningful way that can be translated into policies and practices that increase the student success of Latino males.

As community colleges identify the attributes of student success form their Latino male students and listen to the voice of Latino male students, there is an opportunity to significantly improve as well as offer opportunities that result in stimulating economic prosperity and life-long success. Community colleges can greatly assist Latino male students desiring educational access to higher education, as Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) have pointed out, "the effects of college are cumulative and mutually shaping" (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 86). However, Blose (1999) cautions institutions of higher education, reminding educators about "the amount of time it takes to earn a degree, suggesting that low graduation rates might be the result of aspects of the institution that impede academic progress, including course availability and scheduling and problems in the advising process" (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 55). There is a need to look at the institution of

higher education as a whole and then integrate key elements regarding peer, faculty, and staff supports that maximize Latino male students' success as they journey toward educational goal attainment. Through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, research can investigate and examine this phenomenon in an effort to further understand the impacts persistence and completion as well as overall student success has on Latino male students.

Chapter 3: The Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the Latino male students' experience in the community college system. This information was collected from the lived experiences of Latino male students through examination of family, culture, and social influences as well as exploration of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement perspectives. This phenomenological research approach consisted of a methodological design, study setting, instrumentation, participant selection, validity and ethical issues, and proposed data analysis procedures.

Introduction to the Methodology

Creswell (2013) has five approaches to inquiry through qualitative research: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. While there are many overlapping characteristics within each of these approaches, the primary phenomenological interest in this study is the exploration of a lived experience by a group of individuals. Phenomenology is the study of individuals who share similar experiences, and then analyzing data for significant statements, meaning units, and the description of the essence of these experiences.

The Research Question

The research question for this phenomenological study was: How do Latino male students describe their educational experience within the community college system? The concepts of student persistence through to completion were explored through this phenomenological research study in order to understand directly from the Latino male students' experience what influences and engagement perspectives they have regarding the community college system. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006), student engagement is defined as "the intersection of student behaviors and institutional conditions" (p.

8). Therefore, in order to understand the essence of Latino male students' experience through influences and engagement, questions focused on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives that supported or hindered the participants' experiences within the community college system. Utilizing a phenomenological approach provided understanding of the subjective experiences and interpretations of the world through the lenses of Latino male community college students. Through a phenomenological interview process, non-leading questions were asked in order for emerging signs, patterns, or themes to develop and reflect the lived experience of the participants. Participants were able to provide data that can guide program and service delivery, support student success, and assist community colleges with strategies for educational practitioners to explore when seeking to better serve this target population.

Purpose and Design

The California community college system's vision is to provide "access to lifelong learning for all citizens and creates a skilled, progressive workforce to advance the state's interests" (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2016b). Therefore, equitable access and success for all students is paramount to achieving this goal. However, Latino male students continue to struggle and fully execute their educational goals, seeming to lack an effective persistence and completion strategy. Many research studies suggest a variety of disparities in minority access and success within the community college system (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Cerna, Pérez, & Sáenz, 2009; Lesure-Lester, 2003; Museus, Nicholas, & Lambert, 2008; Otero, Rivas, & Rivera, 2007; Strange, 1999; Torres, 2006), primarily centered on levels of involvement or engagement on the part of the student as well as supportive services provided by the institution (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Astin, 1993; Astin, 1996; Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, &

Kuh, 2008; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005b; Kuh & Love, 2000; Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014; Waiwaiole, Bohlig, & Massey, 2016; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Purpose. Much of the literature on student engagement and success is currently based on quantitative research, at the 4-year university level, and limited on ethnicity and/or gender differentiations. In addition, there is a strong theoretical dependence on Vincent Tinto's (1975; 1987; 1993; 1997) Critical Race Theory, regarding underrepresented minority experiences within education. However, one of the very evident trends in the current literature is a need for qualitative research and specifically the acquiring of student voice within the research design in order to understand the student perspective of the engagement and student success patterns that are arising for Latino male students. Therefore, discovery of identifiable signs or patterns within the educational experience at the 2-year community college level as well as exploring areas of concern or suggestions directly from Latino male students were critical to this research study. Areas of consideration included personal behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004) as well as personal life situations such as childcare, family and friend support, and community responsibilities (Zepke & Leach, 2012).

Areas regarding the institution also were examined, including familial, cultural, and student influences such as student motivation (Schuetz, 2008), instructional or supportive service practices of the institution of higher education or educators (Kuh, 2001/2002), cultural or structural roles of the institution (Porter, 2006), social and political context in which student engagement takes place (McInnis, 2003; McMahon & Portelli, 2004; Yorke & Knight, 2004), and impact on environmental attributes of the student such as family background and economic status (Law, 2005; Miliszewska & Horwood, 2004). These areas of influence as well as student

engagement perspectives provided greater clarity and understanding from a number of complex concepts, creating a dynamic study full of insights regarding Latino male student success.

Design. Based on Edmund Husserl's (1931) foundational establishment of phenomenological research and Clark Moustakas (1994), one of the leading experts in phenomenological research, phenomenology research utilizes *perception* as the primary source of knowledge, and *knowledge* as the result of personal interactions between self and one's life experiences. *Perception* and *knowledge*, described by a group of individuals, connected to a real-world phenomenon is highly informative. Therefore, engagement perceptions of Latino male students served as a valuable source of information regarding the *essence* of the experienced truth within the community college system. Through one-on-one interviewing and the process of inquiry, I was able to *directly see*–the term *unmittelbare schen* as adopted by Husserl–and then begin to describe the *essence* of this Latino male student phenomenon (Gearing, 2004; Wertz, 2005). Martin Heidegger (1977), further refined Husserl's initial foundations of phenomenology by shifting inquiry from the understanding of essence to the researching of interrelationships between meaning and context, or the connection between the individual's experience and the phenomenon that is being experienced (Akerlind, 2005; Gearing, 2004; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). The Latino male students' engagement perspectives were explored through not only the behavior, emotion, and cognitive patterns and signs that the interviewees' experience, but also through the familial, cultural, and social lenses of their lived experiences.

As a phenomenological researcher, my goal was to seek and describe the different ways that Latino male students experience engagement within the community college system. Then I categorized these lived experiences into areas of meaning that could assist educational

practitioners with effective persistence and completion support efforts within institution of higher educations. With the assistance of 12 Latino male student participants, a range of meanings regarding the community college engagement phenomenon were revealed and represented through shared experiences, providing valuable understanding for future Latino male students as well as educational practitioners within the community college system. Through this phenomenological inquiry, aspects of the Latino male students' condition, their engagement perspectives, and the meaning of student success as a group were discovered (Akerlind, 2005).

Research Population and Sampling Method

The body of evidence available from the literature review points to the potential for patterns or signs, signals, indicators, and symptoms that community college practitioners can identify regarding engagement, persistence, and completion stages that support the overall success of Latino male students. Currently the data exhibits two bodies of thought. First, the influences of a student's family, culture, and social upbringing prior to entering an institution of higher education. Second, the perceptions of a student's behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement within the institutional environment. Through this research study, the quest to understand Latino male students' experiences and the attributes that were necessary to allow Latino male students to focus on their academic persistence and successful completion rather than traditional barriers that were often experienced along the way toward educational attainment were sought.

Sampling method. This phenomenological study focused on interviewing 12 Latino male students currently attending the participating California community college, who were 18 years of age or older, able to communicate in English, and intend to complete their educational goals in Fall 2016, Spring 2017, or Fall 2017. From this research population, I utilized the

argument pattern of *sign* (Machi & McEvoy, 2012) to understand Latino male student behavior, emotion, and cognitive perspectives as they relate to the community college system, and the successes or failures of Latino male students to engage (Castillo et al., 2006; Fry & Lopez, 2012; Llagas & Snyder, 2003). The goal was to identify signs regarding the Latino male students' experience that educational practitioners could begin to understand regarding this minority population.

Sampling procedure. The sample of Latino male students from the participating California community college was one of convenience, as I was an employee at this site. With direct access to gatekeepers such as the institution's Student Services and Instructional Deans, I acquired institutional support for the proposed research study through the local IRB approval as well as commitment for assistance support from the institutional researchers. The participating California community college's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research study on November 11, 2016 and the Concordia University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research study on January 10, 2017. In these submissions, the research's central question as well as a sampling of the interview questions were provided for review. Assistance from the participating California community college's institutional research team were utilized when distributing an informational overview of the study and solicit potential candidates for the study. Solicitation of candidates was completed through an Eligible Candidate email, and based on Creswell's (2013) suggestion that phenomenological studies typically involving "a heterogeneous group…from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15" (p. 78), I selected 12 participants and 3 alternatives from the pool of eligible candidates for participation status. Less than 30 potential candidates were identified after reviewing their eligibility responses, so utilization of the timestamp on the Eligible Candidate email to identifying first-come, first-serve submissions

occurred. Final candidates verbally reconfirmed their eligibility criteria with me prior to being placed in the research study as a participant.

From the Latino male students who were 18 years of age or older, able to communicate in English, and intend to complete their educational goals in the existing semester or within the next semester, I reconfirmed with each candidate their eligibility status through initial phone calls as well as discussed the purpose of the study and explained the processes that would be involved for each participant (Moustakas, 1994). A verbal agreement to participate determined the final pool of 12 participants and three alternates in case there were issues that arose with completion of the research process for any of the selected interviewees (Creswell, 2013), and a 40-minute interview per participant with date, time, and location details were confirmed. Within 48-hours of initial phone contacts, follow-up information was provided via email to thank the candidate for their participation and reiterating the study purpose as well as their agreed commitments. A "Consent to Participate" form (see Appendix B) with a space for the candidate's signature was also included as well as a reminder of the specifics for their interview date and the interview questions that would be asked (Creswell, 2013). The signed consent form was submitted to the researcher prior to the start of the interview. Additional copies of the consent form were available at the interview in the event that the candidate forgot to bring a signed copy (Creswell, 2013).

The first phase, completing a 40-minute interview with the 12 participants, occurred in January–February 2017. The second phase of validating each interview transcription and individual summaries occurred in February–March 2017 with the research participants. The goal was to complete the second phase no more than 8 weeks after their interview in order to keep the information and content fresh in the participants' mind. A gift of $50 cash was given to research

participants upon completion of this 2-phase process as a thank you for their time and efforts in this research study.

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, a primary tool for data collection is the actual researcher (Creswell, 2013). Throughout this research study, the role of the qualitative researcher was that of a moderate participant, "not taking on the role of the participants" (McMillan, 2012, p. 289). The primary data gathering instrument for the study was that of a set of pre-determined interview questions. In addition, a common practice in phenomenological research studies is to elicit emerging data that reflects the participants' understanding of the community college experience. The following is a description of the data collection procedures:

1. Solicitation of 12 interested Latino male student candidates, with 3 alternates who would be waitlisted for the study in case one or more of the initially selected candidates decided not execute their full interview sequence (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This was completed through an Eligible Candidate email (see Appendix A). This initial email solicitation requested a reply for interested potential candidates and served as the first Consent to Participate and Transcription Service Release step through an initial interest statement to be considered for the research study.
2. Interested candidates then went through a screening process in order to select 12 participants and 3 alternatives from the pool of eligible candidates for participation status. Selected candidates reconfirmed their eligibility criteria, review the purpose of study and their expectations as a participant, and provide a verbal Consent to Participant and Transcription Service Release as their commitment to start the participation phase of the research study (Creswell, 2013).

3. The participant and researcher arranged the interview meeting date, time, and location.
4. An email confirmation packet was sent to each of the participants with a thank you letter for participating and full explanation of the research study, a "Consent to Participate and Transcription Service Release" form (see Appendix B) to be brought signed to the interview, and a reminder of the agreed-upon interview meeting details including date, time, and location (Creswell, 2013).
5. An interview reminder phone call/text message and email went out to each of the participants the day before their interview (see Appendix C), confirming the meeting date, time, and location/phone number (rescheduling of meeting time/place occurred as needed).
6. Arrived at the interview site occurred at least 15 minutes early to set-up and greet each interviewee. The following were interview materials were utilized:
    a. Fully charged audio recording device and an external power source for charging as needed throughout the interview session
    b. Blank "Consent to Participate and Transcription Service Release" forms (see Appendix B)
    c. Note paper (for observations/field notes)
    d. An "Interview Protocol" with space to write notes as well as a copy for interviewee to read along as needed (see Appendix D)
7. Collection of the Consent to Participate and Transcription Service Release form occurred prior to the initiation of the interview as final written confirmation of the participant's willingness to participate in this research study.
8. Notes were taken before, during, and immediately after each interview (Creswell, 2013).

9. Each participant was assigned a number to be utilized in documentation moving forward (Creswell, 2013).
10. A transcription service (see Appendix E) was utilized to transcribe the recordings. Each transcription was proofread for any errors (Creswell, 2013).
11. A copy of the transcribed interview session was sent to the participant within 4 weeks of the interview to provide member checking input and the reading the transcription document for review; offering of comments, feedback, and revisions regarding the data collected; and reflection of the information presented (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).
12. A copy of the individual summary was sent to the participant within 8 weeks of their interview to provide member checking input and documents review; offering of comments, feedback, and revisions regarding the data collected; and verify accuracy in the themes and meaning statements (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).
13. Each participant was given a gift of $50 cash upon completion of the 2-phase process including interview participation as well as the interview transcription and individual summary comments, feedback, and revisions.

Data Collection

As a phenomenological research study, the data collection process utilized an interview protocol that prompted participants with questions of inquiry around the research topic. The goal of this 3-phased process with comment, feedback, and revision periods was to elicit the participants' lived experiences within the community college system. Through the emergent discussions with the participants, I sought to understand the meaning or essences of these lived experiences and then present the findings for other educational practitioners to consider and utilize in designing programs or services for this target population.

All interview sessions were audio recorded, field notes were taken, and a transcription service was utilized to transcribe interview session information and then the files were stored on the computer as well as an USB drive backup. The 40-minute, one-on-one interview established the context of experience from the participants' perspective regarding behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004) as well as personal life situations such as childcare, family and friend support, and community responsibilities (Zepke & Leach, 2012). Open-ended questions starting with *what* or *how* were utilized in the interview process in order to elicit their emerging engagement perspectives, providing a greater understanding for educational practitioners regarding Latino male students' community college experience. In addition, field notes and participant observations throughout the interview were documented for further analysis.

After the interview was completed, the transcription service compiled the transcripts of each interview and I sent out via email the participant's transcribed interview for review and validation of content. In addition, from the transcribed information, I developed an individual summary of the findings for each participant and sent their summary out via email the participant's summary for review and validation of content. Comments, feedback, and revisions validated the themes and meaning statements, creating a phenomenological representation of the Latino male students' experience in the community college system.

The interview data, the field notes and observations, and the participants' written comments and validation confirmations were all utilized to formulate summary and recommendations for educational practitioners and future Latino male students. The conclusion addresses credible areas of focus based on direct input from the target population. In addition, the validation from the participants allows educational practitioners to grapple with and ponder

needs for developing or redesigning services and institutional environments that promote student success for the Latino male student population.

Identification of Attributes

This study focused on the Latino male student as well as key signs of engagement within the community college system. Attributes such as culture of origin, engagement, persistence, completion, and student success were explored with Latino male students in order to identify the influences and perspectives that affect this population's community college experience.

Culture of origin. Although empirical support is limited, findings suggested that belief systems, ethnic or racial identity, stereotype vulnerability, and coping styles may in some ways be related to academic success outcomes for Latino male students (O'Brien, Mars, & Eccleston, 2011; Castillo et al., 2006; Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006; Lesure-Lester, 2003). For instance, research by O'Brien et al. (2011) indicated that having system-justifying ideologies (e.g., belief in a just world) negatively affected Latino students' grades among freshmen attending a 4-year institution. Also, research by Castillo et al. (2006) showed that having a stronger ethnic identity may be indirectly related to Latino students' commitment to persistence. Findings by Ong et al. (2006) suggested that ethnic identity and parental support may have negative effects on low socioeconomic status Latino students'. Finally, results by Lesure-Lester (2003) revealed that coping styles were related to a measure of Latino students' persistence among a small sample of students attending a community college in California. Specifically, positive reinterpretation and growth, active coping, and planning were positively related to students' persistence decisions, and alcohol and drug disengagement and denial were negatively related to persistence.

Engagement. Three major types of engagement perspectives existed in this research study (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004): (a) behavioral engagement related to classroom

norms or rules (Finn, 1993; Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl, 1995; Finn & Rock, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Kahu, 2013), the learning process and execution of academic tasks (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Finn et al., 1995; Skinner & Belmont, 1993), and participation in school-related activities (Finn, 1993; Finn et al., 1995); (b) emotional engagement as it relates to student reactions within the classroom setting (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993), reactions with the institution or faculty (Lee & Smith, 1995; Stipek, 2002), or identification with the institution (Tinto, 1993; Voelkl, 1997); and (c) cognitive engagement, referring to the investment in learning.

Persistence. Latino male students' ability to psychologically investment in their learning experience with a desire to effectively plan, implement, and complete the established requirements as well as efficiently navigate the barriers and challenges within the institution were critical to persistence (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). While there were familial, cultural, and social influences that offer support as well as hindrances in a Latino male student's persistence, the self-regulation of one's persistent nature was critical in experiencing student success. According to Connell and Wellborn (1991), as students are able to conceptualize their educational journey and partake in problem solving activities, development of their work ethic, and identifying coping mechanisms through their failures, their success rate and level of persistence greatly increases.

Completion. Within the community college system, students enter the institution with a variety of educational goals. Students could be: (a) a skills-builder student who is an experienced worker taking "a limited number of community college courses to maintain and add to skill-sets required for ongoing employment and career advancement" (California Community

College Chancellor's Office, 2016a), (b) a local or industry-recognized certificate seeker who is interested in becoming certified in a specific technical occupation and entering the workforce, (c) a terminal associates degree student who is interested in earning a degree for entry-level employment placement, or (d) a transfer student intending to complete a core set of courses at the community college prior to transferring to a 4-year college or university setting in order to complete their degree. Therefore, the definition of completion for a student can be one or more of these educational goals depending on the intentions of the student upon entrance to the institution and their experience within the institution.

Student success. California Community College Board of Governors launched a student success taskforce to plan what is now known as the Student Success Initiative, focusing on the core missions for Community Colleges in California (2012): (a) workforce preparation, (b) remediation, (c) transfer to four-year colleges and universities, and (d) degree and certificate completion. According to California Community College Chancellor's Office (2014), there are five keys to success that the system is committed to in order to encourage students to pursue their pathway to success: (a) priority enrollment and academic standards, (b) redesigned student support services, (c) transparency and accountability, (d) streamlined transfer, and (e) improving basic skills instruction. This study explored the Latino male students' perceptions of student success and whether or not their experiences were aligning with the intent of this Student Success Initiative.

The attributes of Latino male students, including their risk circumstances, culture of origin, their role within the institution, engagement perspectives, their ability to persist and complete, and their view of student success were all critical to the educational journey they experience within the community college system. Solicitation of the Latino male student voice

was necessary in order to gather first-hand knowledge of their experience as it relates to persistence and completion of educational goals. From the information provided by current Latino male students, recommendations and suggestions for institutional policy and practice can now be examined at the community college level by educational practitioners.

Data Analysis Procedures

Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006) describe the process of data analysis in a qualitative study as obtaining interviewee narratives that represent the participants' perception of the phenomenon, and then interpreting these perspectives by reading between the lines (Wertz, 2005) and understanding of *meaning* or *essence* of the descriptions. According to Creswell (2013), "data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data…for analysis, [and] then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (p. 180). According to Moustakas,

> the [data analysis] procedures include *horizonalizing* the data and regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and question as having equal value. From the horizonalized statements, the *meaning or meaning units* are listed. These are *clustered* into common categories or *themes*, removing overlapping and repetitive statements. The clustered themes and meanings are used to develop the *textural descriptions of the experience*. From the textural descriptions, structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essences of the phenomenon are constructed. (1994, pp. 118–119)

Therefore, my role was to analyze the transcripts in order to identify emerging narrative elements from each of the participant's interviews that can then be processed into themes. In order to complete this process, the following data spiral technique were utilized (Creswell, 2013):

1. Data organization through the creation and organization of files for the data.
2. Read transcripts several times (Creswell, 2013), make margin notes, and form initial codes through memoing to find key categories or themes (10 or less); each with multiple forms of support evidence.
3. Describe, classify, and interpret the data into codes and themes. Develop a detailed description of what I see "within the context of the setting of the person, place, or event" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Aggregate the text into categories of information and assign a label to the code. I developed a short list of codes (25–30 codes) with matching text segments and then created 5–6 categories or themes. I described any of my own personal experiences through *epoche* or *bracketing*, as well as the *essence* of the lived experience or phenomenon provided by the participants. In addition, I organized the transcriptions with the following activities:
    a. Memo and data storage and organization
    b. Text, passage, or segment location related to themes or codes
    c. Code and theme development
    d. Code labeling comparisons
    e. Abstract conceptualization (as needed)
4. Classified the data into codes and themes from the transcripts that highlight the "individual experiences and the context of those experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 186)

within the lived experience or phenomenon for the Latino male student participants through the development of significant statements.

5. Interpreted the data by "making sense of the data, the 'lessons learned', as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 187)–developed a phenomenological description of *what* happened and a structural description of *how* it was experienced; and developed the *essence* through abstraction of the codes and themes to the larger *meaning* of the data.
6. Member checked the data analysis process in order to obtain feedback on the individual summaries and providing validation of research data and offer an opportunity for comments, feedback, revisions or further discussion prior to the development of the composite summary.
7. Developed a composite summary for the group's statements into meaning units and explaining the essences of the experience from the group perspective.
8. Presented narration of the *essence* of the experience through a visualization the data, utilizing a figure format with colored text segments to support the theme.

As the data spiral technique was being processed, I looked for *breakthrough experiences* (Moustakas, 1994) that may not have been consciously discovered by the participants, but emerged as part of the phenomenon that might otherwise have been seen an ordinary or a normal event. Moustakas (1994) describes breakthrough experiences as "the excitement of discovery, heightened awareness of consciousness, a sense of intuitive knowing and clarity, expanding or opening, joy, a sense of certainty and strength, and feeling deeply and powerfully connected to life" (p. 139). In addition, I looked for *crises experiences* that come "as a result of crises which may have happened suddenly or developed over time…[usually] accompanied by significant

emotional or physical distress, sometime painful feelings of being sad, angry or frustrated, shocked, lost, hopeless, powerless, lonely or deeply questioning" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 139).

Limitations of the Research Design

Timing of this research study's data collect phase within the academic year was a limitation due to the established dissertation program phases, as well as the various winter and first quarter holidays in the community college system's academic year. Data was collected from Latino male student participants who had just or were planning to complete their educational goals in 2017, and so the challenge of competing priorities such as graduation applications, job searching, and starting jobs become an issue. I anticipated these concerns to give context to the expected findings, ethical issues, and potential recommendations presented in the following sections.

It is important to note that many qualitative researchers such as Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990) have developed sound methodological structures with the ability to demonstrate credibility and trustworthiness within the phenomenological research method, however Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2014) highlight from existing qualitative research as a whole a lack of methodological detail or thematic analysis (Cejda, Casparis, & Rhodes, 2002; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004) or failure to provide direct quotes from interviews (Suarez, 2003). Although Crisp et al. (2014) note that several quantitative studies were based on national samples of Latino students (Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; Strayhorn, 2010), the majority of reviewed quantitative studies utilized limited breakout data on ethnicity or community college level differentiation (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harris & Wood, 2013; Harris & Wood, 2014a; Harris & Wood, 2014b; Wood, 2013). In addition, a majority of the reviewed studies utilizing qualitative methods and were small samples of Latino students (not delineating male students specifically) with little to no voice of the actual participants in the study (Dennis, Phinney, &

Chuateco, 2005; O'Brien, Mars, & Eccleston, 2011). Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2014) found that many studies were limited to using descriptive statistics or basic inferential tests such as analysis of variance rather than more sophisticated regression techniques that control for extraneous variables (Lesure-Lester, 2003; Lopez, 1995) and the limited number of studies that considered institutional characteristics did not use recommended hierarchical techniques (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) to properly account for the nested nature of students within postsecondary institutions (Cerna, Pérez, & Sáenz, 2009; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007).

Furthermore, a major theoretical concern was the overreliance of Tinto's (1993) model of student integration to explain Latino academic outcomes (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014). Castillo et al. (2006) noted that when applied to Latino students, person-centered approaches such as Tinto's (1993) model may be problematic, as these models do not account for contextual attributes influencing student success. Moreover, Rendón, Novack, and Dowell (2005), Tierney (1993), and others have criticized the use of Tinto's (1993) model to study the experiences of diverse student groups. Despite these critiques however, the lack of more relevant and developed theories specific to Latino students continues to hamper researchers' ability to move away from using student integration theory to predict academic outcomes (Baker, 2008; Fisher, 2007; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008). Cultural assumptions and the involvement of participants in the research process vary throughout existing research, but there is a clear need for more phenomenological research in critical race theory surrounding the Latino student. In isolation, attributes considered by researchers to improve persistence and completion for Latino male students can be difficult to synthesize (Castillo et al., 2006; Fry & Lopez, 2012; Llagas & Snyder, 2003).

Delimitations. The following delimitations were placed in the design of this research study: students currently attending the participating California community college district (a single community college), 12–15 Latino male students (specific ethnicity, gender, and size of group), community college students who were 18 years of age or older (no dual enrollment high school students), students able to communicate in English (interviews were not be conducted in other languages or translated), and students who intend to complete their educational goals in Fall 2016, Spring 2017, or Fall 2017 (skill building, certificate or degree attainment, and/or transferring). Phenomenological research tends to focus on describing or understanding a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006), and therefore the themes that emerged within the data gathering process provided insights into potential expansions beyond this particular study that would inform practitioners with the needs of Latino male students in the community college setting. Through the primary interests of this study, a description and understanding the phenomenon can inform and recommend applications opportunities for other community college sites. With a limited ability to provide transferable findings, the development of themes and meanings of the Latino male students' experience may serve as useful guidance for consideration by other sites. The results from this research may not produce transferable results due to site-specific findings, however the process in which data was obtained can be utilized by other community colleges wishing to explore the Latino male students' experience. In addition, the ability of this research's findings to inform policy and practice is limited without a theoretical understanding about how these attributes were interrelated and serve to directly and indirectly influence Latino male students.

Validity

As a qualitative methodology was utilized for this study, the issues of concern were credibility and dependability in validating the research. Therefore, in order to provide validity in

this phenomenological research study, credibility (trustworthiness) and dependability (reliability) were demonstrated through member checking (Creswell, 2013). The primary instruments of this qualitative research study were the interview protocol and the researcher. In addition, the Latino male student participants provide a critical role in establishing credible data through feedback loops built into the interview process. Also, the Latino male student participants provided the necessary evidence to present dependable data by validating the themes and meanings as well as offering their comments, feedback, and revisions regarding the data collected and presented by the researcher.

Data instruments. The first instrument for data gathering was the Interview Protocol, a copy of which is included in Appendix D. Within the interview, questions involving familial, cultural, and social influences provided a foundation of understanding as the Latino male student entered into, persisted during, and worked toward completion of his community college experience. Then a transition in the line of question shifts to engagement perspectives of their educational journey within the community college system. A focus on student engagement within the community college system as well as the Latino male students' abilities to persist and complete their educational goals was the primary focus in these questions. In addition, clarity of signs or patterns that two or more Latino male students experienced were explored further in order to explain the essence or meaning of these perspectives. Lastly, the final question focused on the Latino male student's experience within the community college system as a whole, and what recommendations, suggestions, or advice they would give other Latino male students pursuing their educational goals, and/or administration, faculty, or staff desiring to support Latino male student success. This research study established credibility and dependability through the use of detailed field notes, audio recordings, and transcripts for each Latino male

student participant's interview. These measures allowed the data communicated to the researcher to be accessible, available for review, and shared with any interested party.

The second instrument for data gathering was the researcher. Through the development of the interview protocol as well as the transcription of each interview I was able to identify categories and themes. Then I identify key meaning from the data and establish the essence of the Latino male students' experience in conjunction with member checking, in order to allow participants to verify that the data gathered as well as any inferences made were concurrent with their experience. In addition, as I guided the interview process and identified the themes and meanings from the data, an interpretation and presentation of the data was completed with integrity.

Member checking. In order to maximize the validity of this research study, member checking was utilized throughout the analysis process to confirm experiential meaning and essence of the data. Latino male student participants had the opportunity to provide oral input through their interviews. In addition, written feedback regarding the transcripts of the interview session as well as the textural descriptions of *what* happened and structural descriptions of *how* the phenomenon was experienced were shared with the Latino male student participants.

Expected Findings

Findings from this research study can advance understanding of the influences and attributes contributing to Latino male students' engagement and overall success at the community college level. Results of the literature review established a need to extend work conducted by Nora and Crisp (2009), Oseguera, Locks, and Vega (2009), and Padilla (2007), as it relates to the Latino male student population as well as giving voice to minority students at-large. As previously mentioned, this qualitative research study analyzed student engagement and

student success specifically from the student perspective, adding to the limited voice of the Latino male students in the literature to date.

The results provided understanding of Latino male students' community college experiences, and offered opportunities for educational practitioners to enhance the Latino male students' experience for persistence and completion their educational goals. Areas of exploration included influences of family, culture, and social upbringing as well as student engagement with supportive services and instruction at the community college level from behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives. I was able to provide an understanding for educational practitioners and future students regarding the Latino male students' experiences that allows for persistence and completion of educational goals within the community college system.

Family, culture, and society. The data provided key findings regarding family, culture, or social influences for Latino male students at the community college level. Latino male students' ability to separate from their family, culture, or social backgrounds in order to embrace the culture of the community college system still remains unclear and further research is needed. The data did present results revealing cultural discrimination as it relates to Latino male students' coping strategies as well as the impacts of these strategies on student success. Although current literature has identified a range of attributes influencing outcomes of Latino students at-large, scholars focused on predicting student success outcome attributes have only begun to scratch the surface in understanding the role and qualities of cultural values and experiences that predict student success outcomes. Although many researchers acknowledge the importance of values in the Latino culture, there is still an overreliance of ethnocentric theoretical frameworks such as Vincent Tinto's (1993) Critical Race Theory and national datasets that limit examination of culturally relevant experiences. In light of these shortcomings, this research study strived to

extend the work of Harris, Wood, and Newman (2015), Guiffrida (2006), Rendón (2008), and Williams (2014) identifying the themes contributing cultural learning preferences and practices of Latino male students.

Gender specifics. Findings from this research study were intended to bring attention to the need for better understanding student success from the Latino *male* student perspective at the community college level. Current research has proven a number of successful strategies to address Latina female student outcomes (Cole, 2008; Fisher, 2007; Otero, Rivas, & Rivera, 2007), however the limited gender specific studies of Latino male students has proven to be revealing. According to Harper (2014), educational "practitioners have established programs, symposia, and initiatives designed to improve outcomes for men of color, [but] the efficacy of these efforts are questionable…[and] most interventions do not account for masculine identities" (as cited in Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015). In addition, Harper (2014) has found that most activities focused on men of color are centered around "providing spaces for community building and leadership development, [but] often missing were opportunities for [men of color] to critically reflect on themselves as men…[by] paying sufficient attention to important (and sometimes conflict-laden) aspects of their masculinities" (Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015, p. 129). According to Harris, Wood, and Newman (2015), while there are works from several scholars that have addressed men and masculinity in the context of college, only Dancy (2012), Dancy and Brown (2012), Harris, Palmer, and Struve (2011), Harris and Harper (2008), and Martin and Harris (2006) have focused on gender in the literature on men of color. This research study provided additional insight and understanding regarding the motivational causes or effects of gender specific strategies for Latino male student in an effort to assist with persistence and completion of educational goals.

Engagement perspectives. Latino male students' engagement perspectives within the community college system are limited. An understanding of how or why Latino male students achieve success is critical. This research study strove to extend the work of Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009, 2011), identifying themes contributing to the vanishing Latino male with respect to the behaviors, emotions, and cognitive perspectives that hindered or assisted in educational goal attainment.

Some substantial gaps were revealed when formulating the recommendations for community college administration, faculty, and/or staff to effectively promote equity for Latino male students to succeed. Overall, this research study brings about more questions than answers. In light of these findings, this research study recommends the need to continue extending the work of Rendón (2008), identifying the themes contributing to the predictability of student success and better understanding the cultural learning preferences and practices of Latino male students (Guiffrida, 2006; Williams, 2014).

The conclusion within this research study points toward a number of critical areas that need more research in order to provide guidance for educational practitioners or policymakers to consider in the future. There is a need for expansion of the conceptual framework in order to consider additional engagement perspectives. There is also a need to enlarge targeted student population or replicate the study at other locations in order to provide Latino male student perspectives that can be incorporated into student engagement and student success at the community college level.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues of informed consent, confidentiality, and research integrity were all fundamental to this qualitative research. Full disclosure and transparency in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were intrinsically linked to ethics and the methodology (Shaw, 2003). With

interview data gathering as a key component of qualitative research study method, the intimacy and relationship developed between the participant and I around the data gathering, analysis, and presentation of themes, meanings, and essence of the phenomenon were crucial to the research design.

Study consent. To ensure avoidance of any conflicts of interest and to protect the integrity of the study, an informed consent was collected from each participant. Participants were given the purpose of the research in both verbal and written formats describing the study, including the research intentions and methodological procedures. This was done at the solicitation of research candidate stage, through the Eligible Candidate email process in written format; within the initial phone calls to potential candidates, a written confirmation through email was sent to each candidate regarding the student and their interview session; and in written format, in-person at the start of each interview session with a signed copy of the Content to Participate form completed. Participants were informed and provided the opportunity to offer their consent two times prior to initiation of interviews: during the initial phone soliciting when initial agreement to participate was obtained, and on the written consent form submitted to the researcher prior to the interview session. It was made clear that participation was voluntary, research candidates could decline to participate in the study, and research candidates could withdraw from the study without penalty at any point throughout the investigation process.

Confidentiality. Participant confidentiality was also extremely important in this qualitative inquiry study, and special care was taken to assure participants of the level of respect of privacy and data integrity throughout the research study as well as afterwards. Audio recordings, memos, and field notes were compiled solely by the researcher. Collection of data, coding, and storage were completed within the secured confines of a personal computer and

locked file drawers. Case numbers and pseudonyms were assigned for each participant in order to preserve identity and data confidentiality, and were used during data analysis of the individual transcribed sessions as well as development of individual and composite summaries.

Role of the researcher. In qualitative research, I was the primary instrument of data collection (Creswell, 2013), engaging directly with participants and sharing the burden of presenting their lived experienced in a way that clearly represents the essence and meanings of the phenomenon. Data gathered in this phenomenological research design was primarily verbal (Wertz, 2005), through intimate interview sessions and feedback discussion loops (Todres & Galvin, 2005). In addition, I utilized a transcription service in order to assist with transcript development. All stages of the research process included decisions heavily influenced by the researcher, and therefore an interactive role in gathering the Latino male students' perceptions and experience was played by the researcher. Coding of the Latino male students' interview responses, transformation of the data into phrases and statements of *meaning* into the *essence* of the phenomenon, and then identifying *understanding* and contemplation ideas for educational practitioners, future students, and policymakers were presented.

Researcher biases. From a personal perspective, my educational experiences as a minority student with a learning disability (Dyslexia) provided me with a unique perspective. Racially, I appear Caucasian due to my European ancestry; however, ethnically I am more connected to my cultural background as a Latina. Throughout my educational journey, I was able to experience education at a magnet high school as well as attend a Top-10 nationally ranked research university based in part due to my Latina status. In an era of affirmation action reform, students such as myself were highly sought after as candidates for historically exclusive educational programming such as magnet and Top-10 research universities in the United States.

In addition, my individual learning style–often called a learning disability–often put me in a different learning category, with the sense of feeling out of place, academically challenged, or needing to try harder than most students in order to succeed. While these perspectives have greatly influenced my experiences in education, I was able to develop a strong sense of persistence in order to complete my educational goals, much like that of the research participants in this study.

From a professional perspective, I have always worked on the periphery of the traditional educational experience. Through the operation of categorically funded programming, I have engaged in a number of structural support services that assist students with their educational goals. I have worked in the K–12 system preparing middle and high school students for college through college readiness programs, the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program, and various after school programs. I have worked in the community college system in short-term training, Career Technical Education, and Contract as well as Community Education. I have designed TRIO grant-funded projects for the local California State University and University of California sites (federal educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds).

These personal and professional biases served me well in my interactive role of gathering Latino male students' *perceptions* and *experiences*, and then transforming the gathered data into phenomenon *understanding* for educational practitioners, future students, and policymakers. My holistic perspective of multiple levels of education, a lived experience of being an outsider, and an understanding of traditional community college structures, methods, and services provided perspective from which to analyze Latino male students' perspectives and lived experiences with the community college system and their persistence and completion efforts.

That being said, I am a female. Therefore, studying the Latino male students' perspectives as well as exploration of first-generation or other Latino cultures than were different from my own were a research bias challenge. My experiences as a child of educated parents, a Christian, and a United States citizen also added to the lens in which I view the world and therefore engaged in this research study. In order to isolate bias in my research I concentrated on theories from the literature to conceptually frame the research study, interview questions and dialogues that solicited feedback and data validation from the participants, and a methodological design that gathered information directly from the source of the participants being studied, with a conscious effort to remain culture and gender sensitivity.

Ethical issues. Ethical issues related to interpretational errors or researcher bias were protected against in several ways. During the initial contacts, the research was cautious not to provide specific desired outcomes, but rather explain the general process of conducting a qualitative research study. This allowed the participants to be open vessels of information and to share their perspectives of the lived phenomenon, discovering truth for themselves, and then participating in the validation of analysis and meaning development process. In addition, personal or professional biases were not shared with the research participants. However, continuous self-monitoring of the want to overshare was employed in order to maintain research quality and ethics. Lastly, continuous communication regarding: 1) confidentiality in the study's design, and 2) reassurance that no negative repercussions were involved with either their academic status or process as it relates to their participation in the study or their need to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodological components of selecting this phenomenological research study. A full description of the research study setting, design and

process for gathering and analyzing the research data, and ethical issues that were consider when conducting the research. The above mentioned sections presented a strong, effective, and ethical research study that explored the data and results of Latino male students' in this phenomenological study, sought understanding of familial, cultural, and social influences as well as engagement perspectives of behavior, emotion, and cognitive engagement that assisted with persistence and completion that lead to student success.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Student engagement and the concepts of persistence, completion, and student success can be analyzed through the lived experiences of students. Both the examination of family, culture, and social influences as well as exploration of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement perspectives can provide insights into a deeper understanding of what attributes of engagement support student success. In order to maximize student success, understanding the lived experience as well as signs or patterns that exist for the target population is critical.

Introduction to Data Analysis and Results

This chapter begins with a brief review of the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research question, and role of the researcher. The sample, method, and analysis procedures are presented as a recap. A summary of findings from 12 Latino male student interviews is laid out in seven themes. Finally, a thorough presentation of the data and results is given with seven key themes.

Statement of the problem. According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009), "Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline" (p. 54). Despite the steady increase of Latinos enrolling over the past several decades, the problem remains that Latino male student persistence and completion rates are not keeping up proportionally with other student population groups (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006). It is critical that educational practitioners understand Latino male students' experience and motivation perspectives when seeking to help them attain their educational goals.

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the Latino male students' experience in the community college system. This information was collected from the lived experiences of Latino male students through examination of family,

culture, and social influences as well as exploration of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement perspectives.

The research question. The research question for this phenomenological study was: How do Latino male students describe their educational experience within the community college system? The concepts of student persistence and completion were explored throughout this phenomenological research study. Gathering experiences of Latino male students directly regarding their family, social, or cultural influences as well as engagement perspectives in the community college system were explored. The focus of inquiry was based on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives that supported or hindered the participants' community college experience. Through the phenomenological interview process, questions were asked for emerging signs, patterns, or themes that developed the essence of the experiences by these Latino male students.

Role as the researcher. My career has spanned education, economic, and community development in California**.** Living and working in this highly agricultural area for the state, with a Latino population well above 50% in most cities, I was concerned regarding the small numbers of Latino males choosing to enter into a college experience. Many young men in California are the children of immigrant farm laborers, have learned that the male role is to work in the fields or in the workforce to provide for their families, and that college is not a high priority. As I moved from high school to community college career technical education, I puzzled over the factors that led such a small number of Latino males to succeed in college. This interest became the basis for my research study, incorporating motivational factors into community college programs that would successfully recruit young males and keep them engaged in completing their educational goals. The most logical course of action was to speak to a number of Latino males about their

influences and perspectives in obtaining their educational goals at the community college level, thus leading to the methodological approach chosen for this study. I served as a moderate participant in this qualitative research, gathering data and analyzing the inputs within this research study.

Description of the Sample

The following were the original delimitations projected for this research study: students currently attending the participating California community college, 12–15 Latino male students, community college students who were 18 years of age or older, students able to communicate in English, and students who intend to complete their educational goals in the existing semester or within the next semester.

Sampling method. I interviewed 12 Latino male students currently attending the participating California community college in this phenomenological study. From this research population, I utilized the argument pattern of *sign* to understand Latino male student behavior, emotion, and cognitive perspectives as they relate to the community college system, and the successes or failures of Latino male students to engage. The goal was to understand the Latino male students' experience and provide insights for educational practitioners.

Sampling procedure. The sample of Latino male students from the participating California community college was one of convenience, as I was an employee at the site. With direct access to gatekeepers such as the institution's Student Services and Instructional Deans, I acquired institutional support for the proposed research study through the local IRB approval as well as commitment for assistance support from the institutional researchers. The participating California community college's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research study on November 11, 2016. In this submission, the research's central question as well as a sampling

of the interview questions was provided for review. Candidates were solicited through an Eligible Candidate email. From the 85 respondents, I screened the 81 interested candidates, based on eligibility criteria set out for the research; particularly in the area of completing their educational goals this semester or next. The sample was narrowed down to one student who completed their educational goals in December 2016, 14 students who completed their educational goals in May 2017, and nine students completing their educational goals in 2017. A total of 12 potential candidates and 3 alternative candidates were confirmed as research study participants (one additional alternative candidate was added in order to get 12 participants), and from this pool of selected participants, a verbal reconfirmation of eligibility criteria occurred and interviews were set. A total of 10 originally selected candidates and 2 alternate candidates completed the research study.

Table 3

Results of Solicitation Email Distribution to Participant Conversion

Interested in Participating		Answered 3rd Criteria Correctly			12 Participants	3 Alternates	1 Additional Alternate
Yes	No	Answered all 3 Eligibility Criteria	All Eligible	Selected for Participation	Participated	Participated	Participated
81	4	46	24	16	10	1	1

A total of 12 potential candidates and 3 alternative candidates were confirmed as research study participants and from this pool of selected participants, a verbal reconfirmation of eligibility criteria occurred and interviews were set. A total of 10 originally selected candidates and 2 alternate candidates completed the research study.

Research Methodology and Analysis

Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006) describe the process of data analysis in a qualitative study as obtaining interviewee narratives that represent the participants' perception of the phenomenon, and then interpreting these perspectives by reading between the lines. According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher analyzes the data by establishing horizontal statements that have meaning and then cluster the information into themes. Therefore, this qualitative study analyzed the phenomenological experiences of 12 Latino male students, took their horizonalized statements from the interview transcripts, and then identified emerging meaning units or narrative elements from each of the interviews that were then processed into themes resulting in the study's findings.

Organizational overview. This qualitative research study was designed to formulate practical applications for both the student and institution in order to effectively engage Latino male students within the community college system. Examination of influences from family, culture, and society as well as engagement perspectives of behavior, emotion, and cognition is presented through the literature review, explored through an in-depth interview process, and then analyzed through the community college Latino male students' experience.

Familial, cultural, and social foundations. Often there are linkages between Latino students' academic experiences and performance that are directly associated with their familial and cultural upbringing as well as perspectives of education and workplace aspirations (Campa, 2010; Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Mason, 2008; Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Wood, 2012b; Wood, Hilton, & Lewis, 2011). For example, parental and peer support are critical to self-efficacy development leading to student success (Astin, 1993). Cultural or familial background in higher education can have detrimental outcomes if external influences are unable

to support Latino male students, such as guidance in the overall higher education experience if a first-generation student or the feeling of cultural dissonance and the ability to assimilate to the institution's culture of learning (Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu & Rodriguez, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016a; 2016b), the majority of high school students expect to enroll in some form of higher education, however only 15.8% of Latino male students followed through with this commitment in 2013.

Three engagement perspectives. Student engagement continues to evolve as a concept in higher education, with the potential for structural systems and design to be implemented that support student success (Connell, 1990; Finn & Rock, 1997). According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), there are three engagement perspectives that are critical to the make-up of a student's identity and life experience: (a) behavior, (b) emotion, and (c) cognition. *Behavioral engagement* has to do with student conduct or being on-task. *Emotional engagement* is focused on attitudes as well as interests and values (Palacios, 2014; Wood, 2014). *Cognitive engagement* emphasizes motivational goals and self-discipline as it relates to the learning environment (Boekarts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Zimmerman, 1990).

Methodological strategies. This phenomenological strategy is outlined through its methodology with the design, study setting, instrumentation, participant selection, validity and ethical issues, and data analysis procedures. In order to complete this methodological strategy, a data spiral technique was utilized (Creswell, 2013). Organization of the data through the creation of files and a reading of transcripts, notes, and initial memo coding occurred to find key categories or themes with supportive evidence. As the data spiral technique was processed, I looked for *breakthrough experiences* (Moustakas, 1994) that may not have been consciously discovered by the participants, but emerged as part of the phenomenon that might otherwise have

been seen an ordinary or a normal event. Moustakas (1994) describes breakthrough experiences as "the excitement of discovery, heightened awareness of consciousness, a sense of intuitive knowing and clarity, expanding or opening, joy, a sense of certainty and strength, and feeling deeply and powerfully connected to life" (p. 139). In addition, I looked for *crises experiences* that come "as a result of crises which may have happened suddenly or developed over time…[usually] accompanied by significant emotional or physical distress, sometime painful feelings of being sad, angry or frustrated, shocked, lost, hopeless, powerless, lonely or deeply questioning" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 139).

Coding and thematic procedures. The following were the coding and thematic procedures originally identifying and there was no deviation from Chapter 3 protocol, nor problems that occurred in the analysis for this research study:

1. Describe, classify, and interpret the data into codes and themes.
2. Classifying the data into codes and themes from the transcripts that highlight the "individual experiences and the context of those experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 186) within the lived experience or phenomenon for the Latino male student participants through the development of significant statements.
3. Interpreting the data by "making sense of the data, the 'lessons learned', as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 187)–developed a phenomenological description of *what* happened and a structural description of *how* it was experienced; and developed the *essence* through abstraction of the codes and themes to the larger *meaning* of the data.
4. Member checking of the data analysis process in order to obtain feedback on the individual summaries and providing validation of research data or to offer an opportunity

for comments, feedback, revisions or further discussion prior to the development of the composite summary.

5. Developing a composite summary for the group's statements into meaning units and explaining the essences of the experience from the group perspective.
6. Presenting narration of the *essence* of the experience through a visualization the data, utilizing a table or figure format with text, not numbers.

Each of the 12 participants' interview transcripts were converted into individual summaries that were color-coded to provide separation of ideas. This allowed for development of individual, distinct impressions of the codes, and 11 of the 12 transcripts and individual summaries were member checked. Then I converted the categories and themes into a composite summary that was analyzed for Latino male students' experiences as a whole group–the essence of the phenomenon.

***Phenomenological approach*.** Phenomenology is understanding the essence of the experience, typically drawing from philosophy, psychology, and education (Creswell, 2013). The primary focus in phenomenology is the study of individuals who share similar experiences, and then analyzing data for significant statements, meaning units, and the description of the essence of these experiences. The interview questions were predominantly around challenges and successes while engaged at the community college level from the primary target population, Latino male students. Participants discussed their decision to attend college, followed by how their engagement is shaped by their academic and personal commitments. Each interview concluded with the interviewee's suggestions for improving Latino male engagement.

Summary of the Findings

In the following sections, there were seven themes and 32 codes that emerged from the 12 participant interviews. The discussions were around each participant's story of how they engaged with the community college system, their definitions of persistence and student success, influences that supported or distracted them while in their community college experience (e.g., family, culture, and/or society), their engagement or disengagement experiences (e.g., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perspectives), supportive or disruptive feedback received in college, and recommendations, suggestions, or advice for other Latino male students or college personnel attempting to support student success. The responses were grouped into the following seven themes:

Theme 1: Lack of preparation. The majority of the Latino male student participants lacked preparation or options when it came to choosing a college. "I didn't prepare in high school to go to the university, so I ended up going to community college" (Participant 10, personal communication, January 27, 2017). This theme of lack in preparation arose primarily through responses regarding focus as well as academic, financial, or emotional readiness to pursue their educational goals at the community college level.

Theme 2: Persistence. The majority of the Latino male student participants commented that they sought a better life or something different than what they grew up experiencing. My brother "motivated me to finish college and make something of myself, make my parents proud. Let them know that they did a good job raising us. That you did a good choice–you made a choice by coming over here [from Mexico], giving us a better life" (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017). This theme highlighted the need to keep going despite the odds and never give up on their educational goals.

Theme 3: Pursuit of knowledge and real-life application. The majority of the Latino male student participants wanted to understand their field of study and experience direct application opportunities related to real-life or the workplace environment. "I think the more they [students] connect to the things that they are doing, that leads to success…if you love knowledge and know what to expect, and you have already done everything in the past [in the classroom setting] then I think you have more of a fighting chance" (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017). This theme of knowledge and application brought forth satisfaction and confidence in the Latino male student participants.

Theme 4: Influences matter. The majority of the Latino male student participants spoke about their family and culture as key influencers in the support or distractions experienced through their community college journey. While many of the male Latino students had family members encouraging them to pursue their educational goals, the pull toward family responsibilities or cultural expectations were strong. Once in the community college system, counselors, teachers, and peers were key contributors to persistence and completion efforts. Most the of the male Latino students shared the sense of a learning community from other college students and the community college personnel.

Theme 5: Becoming a successful student. The majority of the Latino male student participants experienced significant transformational experiences in their community college journey. One participant shared, "I never really learned how to learn correctly" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017), but each of the participants shared how throughout their community college experience they were able to transition into a community college student. This theme of learning from not only a cognitive perspective, but emotional and behavioral perspectives as well, were critical to their student success.

Theme 6: More supportive feedback needed. The majority of the Latino male student participants were faced with many challenges in their lives throughout the community college experience. In order to preserver, they had to identify their supporters and seek out people to encourage and motivate them along the way toward their educational goals. Feedback such as "You are doing a good job, just keep on doing it" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017) were very critical for Latino male students to hear, encouraging them to continue to persevere.

Theme 7: Be your best advocate. The majority of the Latino male student participants hoped to encourage other Latino male students to believe in themselves, persevere, and not be afraid as well as advise them to make a plan, stay focused, and ask questions. When "everybody was in agreement that this [college] was a focus and a priority" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017), persistence and completion became a higher priority. However, even with the lack of support from family or friends, one participant shared that he tried "to listen to myself, I feel like I have a good judgment with things…I try to give myself some room to change my ways" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and become the student he knew he could be. This theme of advocating for your own needs as a student, does not come naturally for most Latino male students.

Presentation of Data and Results

The goal in this study was to identify common themes contributing to the academic success of Latino males in the community college system. The following is a summary of interview questions and responses that the 12 Latino male student participants shared.

Theme 1: Lack of preparation. The first theme to emerge was Latino male student participants' lack of preparation or options when it came to choosing a college. Only five of the

12 students possessed the necessary focus to succeed in pursuing their educational goals on the first try; four attempting community college once, one attempting three times, and one attempting five times prior to succeeding due to a variety of challenges such as financial obstacles, family obligations, or health issues. Four of the participants had no idea what they were going to do in college, and three of the participants were looking for the opportunity to explore and find their motivation through the college experience. "Had no idea what I was doing honestly" (Participant 2, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and there was a sense that since many of the participants had no particular interests or goals, that community college seemed like the best option in order to get some motivation. A lack of clear direction was evident in over half of the participants, from not having any idea of interests to starting with general education or remedial courses. However, three of the participants spoke about wanting to contribute to the community, find their passion, having a respectable job, and pursuing a career in something they loved. "I wanted to do something in life that I would enjoy and something that would allow me to give back to my community" (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and "you need to find something that you love to do…that you are passionate about so it really doesn't feel like you are working" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Only two participants had an initial goal of either an industry certification or associates degree. Also, personal or financial contributions toward the family's stability were often an obstacle or responsibility that lingered for these Latino male student participants when pursuing their educational goals. One participant mentioned that he dropped out to take care of his grandparents and another stated "responsibilities at home were too great for me to go to school (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

In addition, the ability to navigate the educational institution was challenging for the Latino male student participants. Only four of the participants were able to get through the application process–most often with the assistance of a counselor–and start attending through the established onboarding process. "They [a counselor] set me up with an ed [educational] plan and the rest is history" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Also, and academic preparation was low in most cases. Two of the participants started in remedial math or writing courses. One of the participants had a horrible first impression regarding the academic experience and dropped out after the first semester. Over half of the participants spoke at some point about their lack of expectations for themselves at the high school level, and therefore a lack of preparation to entering a 4-year college or university experience, with a sense of settling or entering a community college as their sole opportunity for pursuing higher education.

Furthermore, financial ability was a strong indicator in many of the Latino male student participants' responses. One of the participants struggled with finances due to his out-of-state fees and legal status, until further understanding of the opportunities that exist with the Dream Act were explained and clarity occurred. Two participants stated that they attended due to the cheap costs and pay as you go opportunity. "I like the idea of paying off my school as I went versus…taking out loans every semester" (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and "I figured I'll do most of the investment myself. So, I came to school and just paid in payments to go again" (Participant 9, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Three of the participants commented on the benefits of being able to work while going to college, stating "this [community college] is something I can do while I work my two jobs" (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and "I figured I could squeeze in maybe another job in the morning or school" (Participant 9, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Campus jobs

such as work study or classified positions through the college also produced a connection to the institution that was highlighted by two of the participants.

Lastly, the participants spoke of their emotional readiness in relation to themselves as well as parents or a supportive adult, and friends or trusted co-workers as motivators who encouraged, piqued interests, or provided a sense of belief or support in the Latino male student participant's pursuits. One participant highlighted that attending the community college was the level of belief he had for himself, a confidence that he could success at this level. Two of the participants highlighted their mom or dad were their source of support, "my dad was totally behind me, everybody was" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Two of the participants pointed toward a mentor within the social services arena that provided a sense of security and individuals that were admirable or respected from their point-of-view. Two of the participants attended where one of their peers went, and two of the participants followed the advice of a friend or trusted co-worker modeling their experience of success at the community college level. No matter who the motivators were, the need to find the drive or push to succeed was evident in each of the Latino male student participants; a drive to see their educational goals through to completion no matter what came their way.

Theme 2: Persistence. The second theme to emerge was a sense of drive that was necessary to find in this experience in order to obtain their educational goals. The majority of students commenting on the desire to have a better life, a life of purpose or contribution, or simply improving upon their socioeconomic status. Six of the participants explained this drive factor as the need to keep going, or doing, or looking for the target ahead in order to accomplish goals. "You just never give up, you have to keep going" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and the comment that "the career, the education, no matter what no one can

take it from you and that is what you have to keep looking for" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). In addition, half of the participants stated that they had to get to the point where giving up or letting up were not an option, and a key element in persisting throughout their college experience. Three of the participants expressed this sentiment in the following statements "continue trying even in the face of adversity" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017), "keep going at it until you achieve it" (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017), and "you keep going no matter what. You come to an obstacle and you overcome it and you learn from it" (Participant 9, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Another strand of thought was around a mindset of being fully invested. Six of the participants explained this mindset as trying to either achieve or accomplish your goals in life. With this mindset came the need to move forward despite setbacks, past failures, fear of the unknown, or concerns about one's ability to succeed. Two of the participants explained this mindset as "seeking what you are looking for, just trying to find a way to make it work, to achieve the goal" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and "having grit, drive, determination, going against the odds so that you achieve your goals whether they are long term or short term" (Participant 6, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Theme 3: Pursuit of knowledge and real-life application. The third theme to emerge was a sense of positioning for the participants as they found their role in academia and experienced success as a student. Four of the participants indicated that passing classes with a grade satisfactory to them equaled success as well as a level of participation that goes beyond just doing the work, to really understanding the content. "Being able to pass all your classes with the grade that you find to be satisfactory" (Participant 5, personal communication, January

27, 2017). Four of the participants highlighted the benefits of making connections and having hands-on experiences as critical to real-life application:

> I think the more they [students] connect to the things that they are doing, that leads to success…if you are going into a field and you don't really have any experience in it then I find it hard to have success, but if you love knowledge and know what to expect, and you have already done everything in the past then I think you have more of a fighting chance. (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017)

In addition, the exposure of knowledge through multiple experiences allows for transferability, critical thinking, questioning of why things do or do not work. Student success comes from "being more curious about the subject you are learning about" (Participant 9, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and "you actually know the material" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Applicability of school to work connections was highlighted by a number of the participants as well. "It is something that you are going to be able to take from school and use it in the everyday world" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Also, student success is "all the little things that you carry with you that's not the degree too, like the experience that you learn from and it is interactions that you gained from meeting people that come to your class or people that you meet going to field trip" (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017). An awareness was present with many of the participants that "once you start working it's actually what you learned that is going to help you" (Participant 10, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Furthermore, there was a sense of pride that came from experiencing success that the Latino male student participants expressed. Many of the participants were going to be their first in their family to obtain a community college certificate or degree, and wanted to stand above the

crowd when it came to their educational pursuits. "[I am] first one out [of my family] trying to make a go of it" (Participant 6, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Two of the participants spoke of setting "yourself to accomplish your goals, building a strong work ethic and being unwavering in your determination" (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and the need to be a part of something great–the college experience. There was also often a sense of competition in the discussions regarding sibling or family member rivalry, peers competing to set the curve or for workplace internships, and being better than the rest as it relates to the ethnic group at-large. Part of succeeding in this competitive environment is consistency and the ability to continue to show up.

Theme 4: Influences matter. The fourth theme to emerge was the influential nature of family that assisted these Latino male student participants in pursuit of their educational goals. Over half of the participants commented that family was a huge influencer regarding their pursuit of higher education and a feeling that the Latino male student's investment in community college was often shared as an entire family experience. Comments that motivated and supported the Latino male participants included "congratulations, we're proud of you, just little speeches I never thought I'd hear from them growing up" (Participant 6, personal communication, January 27, 2017), "they are behind me, they are willing to help me in the long run no matter what" (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and "you are doing a good job, just keep on doing it" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017). In addition, several of the participants indicated that they shared their college experiences or course projects with family through stories, pictures sent by text or shown in person, or posts on social media. One participant stated "everybody was in agreement that this [his educational experience] was a focus and a priority" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Seven of the participants attributed key support from a female figure in their life, primarily their mother, but others of note included an oldest sister, girlfriends, or wife. One participant said regarding his mother that she would tell him, "you've got to go to school. You don't want to end up like these guys [my siblings or other family members] not doing anything" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Only three of the participants attributed key support from a male figure in their life, primarily their father, but others of note included an uncle, brother, sons, high school teacher, and co-workers.

While the sense of support was somewhat limited regarding advice in the college experience due to the limited exposure of most families, the overall sentiments were pride in the choice to pursue higher education, encouragement and a push to do one's best, prodding to make something of one's self, or support to get ahead of the status quo and earn more money. Most often the family influences were through the female members. Female members of the family often had more opportunities to pursue some level of postsecondary education, if not a career in their field of study. Occasionally the male members of the family were afforded the opportunity to pursue higher education in addition to their family and breadwinner obligations as a Latino male, allowing for very strong influences in the lives of these particular Latino male student participants. When a Latino male student participant had an older male figure that had obtained some community college experience, they utilized this as a springboard of encouragement and motivation. If the opportunity to pursue community college level education was never given to either of the parental figures, there was often hope for the pursuit of higher education opportunities as a legacy changer for the generations to come. This was highlighted by one participant who said "let them [my parents] know that they did a good job raising us [my brother and I]. That you did a good choice–you made a choice by coming over here [to the United States

from Mexico], giving us a better life, not only for us but for them as well" (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

In addition, counselors and faculty as well as friends, peers, and co-workers became key contributors to persistence and completion efforts once engaged in the community college experience. Counselors provided help, solved problems, offered guidance, supplied direction, and became a source of answers to life's many questions as well as a connector to resources such as student workshops, tutorial services, and special program referrals. Faculty were critical in seeing and connecting with Latino male student participants at the junctures in which they were at in their educational journey, and then having the immediate ability to spark interests or provide assistance needed to make each student successful; being a much-needed advisor and mentor for first generation college-going students. One participant said regarding faculty at the community college that they were "really, really helpful and I have to thank them for that. I just appreciate the time they took out of their lives and used it for me to help me" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Lastly, friends, peers, and co-workers gave a strong sense of living life together, a strong bond of community and advice sharing, and ongoing encouragement and support when life got hard. One participant shared that a colleague encouraged him by saying "if I can do it, you're still young. Go for it. You are the only person limiting yourself from achieving your goal…he had kids, wife and he's working and school. Between working and school he managed to make everything work. He showed me it can be done if you put your mind to it" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant shared that his friends "just kind of put it in my head that school is something I should be doing…they tell me that they are happy for me and they are happy to see I'm trying to get an education" (Participant 2, personal

communication, January 27, 2017). Finally, another participant stated that fellow students and peers were a source of support, and that he knew 80–90% of them through his time at the college, just talking to them or finding out who had good ideas and then starting up discussions for an exchange of ideas (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Negative impacts of strong influences. While the influences of family, institutional personnel, friends, peers, and co-workers often had positive outcomes as mentioned above, there were also a number of negative impacts on the Latino male student participants from these same influencers. First was the need for time management, life balance, and navigating family and peer pressures were topics that came up frequently in order to persist, and not drop out of the Latino male student's community college experience. Four of the participants highlighted time management challenges related to needing time for family obligations, extracurricular activities with friends, or childrearing responsibilities. One participant stated "I had to learn how to set priorities and communicate with my spouse and letting them know when I can do this and I cannot do that" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017). In addition, five of the participants highlighted life balance challenges related to balancing time in school or studies with assistance the family or friends may need regarding family businesses, family emergencies, or family or friend requests. One participant comments that he was told by a family member that "you are doing so well in school maybe you need to take a couple days off and help me do some things, but you just know you don't have that kind of time on your hands" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant shared his need to tell friends "I can't socialize with you guys…you learn that you have to like cut ties with certain people to succeed" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and yet another participant

confessed his realization that "we [he and his friends] are not going to the same places" (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Second, four of the participants mentioned the strong sense of pressure or demand to work, earn a living, and be able to financially provide for their family as a distract element in their community college experience. One participant shared the internal dialogue of concern from his family stating "hey, school will always be there, you can always come back to school, maybe you should go work or something, maybe you should do something you know with me or I got a job opportunity for you if you want to do it, [and] I have to say, I don't know, I just don't want to do it right now" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017), another stated his feelings of "I should be working" (Participant 2, personal communication, January 27, 2017), and a third participant was told by his father that he could get him "a job, you don't have to apply for it. I pick up the phone, call your uncle and you're going to go to work. It's, you've got a job. You're going to make money. You will be able to help support the family" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). In addition, one participant shared that the worth of a Latino male was in one's ability to work and provide for the family, and stated "I was disappointed while growing up simply because they [my siblings] never saw me as being good academically. That the only worth was how well I could work" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017). More than half of the Latino male student participants worked 20–40 hours per week while attending college.

Third, there were five participants who highlighted a number of cultural family-oriented implications as distracting in their educational pursuits. The first was this need to get married, start a family, and support a family by getting a job. One participant shared "I feel like there is still more out there in the world to see and these people [his peers] are settling down too early. I

mean, it's their choice. I'm not going to fault them for it but that's just how I saw it that these people just settling down. I guess, the culture kind of points toward that direction" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Furthermore, as a collectivist culture "the needs of a group are often more important than the needs of the individual, many people are expected to be able to carry out a variety of tasks that are meant to help the family" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017). With this perspective in mind it is difficult to make an individual decision to pursue educational goals without the full support of the family.

Fourth was the emphasis on brawn versus brains, and an overall sense of being a breadwinner for the family by entering the workforce. One of the participants shared his realization that either "I was going to be using my brain or sacrificing my body for it [work] and I know that the more I do it [obtain knowledge through college, I] could use less of by body and more of by brain for it [work]" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant shared his disappointment that "you [his father] want us [Latino youth] to be okay with not really achieving goals, just being able to keep everything afloat and if it means if you're living paycheck to paycheck, make it work" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Lastly, a participant shared his struggles with justifying his choice to be a student when his grades did not align with his hard work and dedication to his studies, and his frustration when confronted by men in his family of "why is this [his grades were] not reflective…you spend all your time in the classroom…what is going on with the grades and you can't say anything because the classroom is over, you can't change anything you just got to move on and keep doing it" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Fifth was short-term versus long-term goals as they relate to academic preparedness and workforce success. One participant shared that in his culture "instead of seeing it [college] as an

investment many Hispanic cultures see that as a waste of time because it's not productive now, even though cognitively you are leaning something in your mind. They don't see that" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017). He also went on to say that "many times here in the United States as Hispanics we don't have the foundation as far as education goes as far as English writing, reading skills…culturally, we are very goal-driven. In other words, give me a goal and I can get it…[and that] education isn't seen as a material thing. It's more done as a hands-on physical, visual. Not really sitting in class and learning type of thing…[so] when you sit down and read a book that is being lazy" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017). With such a poor perception of education as an investment and the lack of preparation to enter postsecondary education, the value of the time, wages lost, and family obligations deferred were all areas of concern for support and persistence in a community college experience.

Disruptive feedback. In addition to personal negative influence issues, eleven of the 12 Latino male student participants had negative feedback situations occur within the institution of higher education setting, ranging from student attitudes and behaviors, full classes and waitlisted courses, teacher disengagement, or lack of information regarding course sequencing and resources. One of the participants shared his frustration that, "in reality when the students asking for help regardless if they are there to learn or not, your job is giving them help" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017). With such mixed messaging, many of the Latino male student participants struggled to find their place in the community college experience, and there was a sense of great need to provide better feedback and input into the lives of these Latino students.

Theme 5: Becoming a successful student. The fifth theme to emerge was an overwhelming lack of preparation and direction, the need to establish self-confidence, and a critical need for intrusive support and intentional connecting points from the institution in order to assist these Latino male participants in their educational goal attainment. The general sense of being a successful learner can be summed up in this mother's advice to her son "if you have the right attitude and the right skills you should be able to get education and then you should be able to get your money afterwards" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017). However, most of the Latino male participants felt "I never really learned how to learn correctly. In terms of going to school, we [Hispanics] allow ourselves to just sit there" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017) and not ask questions or participate in the learning process.

With this juxtaposition at hand, the need for building study skills and confidence as well as learning environments that promote student success are critical. The majority of the Latino male student participants had discovered cognitive skills such as focus during class, reading textbooks and reviewing materials for their courses, note taking, skim reading, discussions with peers, asking questions in class, utilizing online tools, attending faculty office hours, and study locations that fit their particular learning needs. While the specific strategies varied widely, six of the participants found it helpful to learn with others. Most found their peers in the classroom, the "person sitting next to you is like what did you get, you know, how did you get that, I did this, oh okay because I was doing it this way and it just started like that and then that person turned to the one next to them and then to the here and over her that's basically what the group was" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017). These partnerships were often founded out of a weakness that the Latino male student participant had, and the need to find a

network of people that could assist with their cognitive development. One participant stated "we had a weakness in this certain problem area [math] and then hey let's meet at this coffee shop and let's go over the homework and it's kind of like do the homework together and then break down the problem, just make sure that we are understanding it correctly" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant stated "he [his peer] enjoys it [the difficult subject]. I have to take it. There is a difference" (Participant 7, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Many took their peer groups beyond the classroom to study time in the library, question and answer sessions via texting, or time management strategies and division of tasks in order to persist through their courses.

Very few of the Latino male students entered confidently into their community college experience knowing exactly what they wanted to do, having 100% support from their family or friends, or truly understanding what it would take to achieve student success. After one of the participants found himself on probation, he successfully passed his mandatory guidance class and stated "it felt good. Just knowing that you can actually do good in school…[and at that moment] I knew I could do it. So I am like 'why am I not trying to do it?'" (Participant 10, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant stated "I did not want to feel like a failure…I wanted to be successful in achieving, that I could do it and it was more for like my kids, or anyone for that matter, if I could do it you could do it too" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Two other participants said "it [college] feels like it gives you something to do" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and "I'm motivated to continue learning" (Participant 9, personal communication, January 27, 2017). As each participant developed in their confidence as a community college student, their drive to engage rose and often a pride of family supportive gestures followed.

In addition, the majority of participants indicated they each discovered or developed a learning environment that encouraged and supported them along their community college journey. Through these informal and formal learning community experiences, the Latino male students were able to find the help they needed. "By the community college making the learning communities, it helped a lot because you're not in it on your own. You know, you pretty much have this family of friends that you know, we know each other, we joke, we laugh and we just make it you know less stressful for each other" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). In addition, "I would meet with them [peers], communicate, things like that, things that they were doing, what they were looking at, what they were learning and how they would do in the tests" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

Assistance found through intrusive supportive services and intentional connecting points for these Latino male students were critical through college advocates. Many found intrusive support from peers, faculty, and counselors. Peers who shared their discoveries along the way or provide advice on how to study or get through the system resulted in friendships that encouraged through a shared experience. One participant shared his peer support through the following statement "We [students] want to just throw in the towel but we have that little group of people that you know [learning community], dude we're almost there! One semester down and you have the next semester, you're done with your certificate and then you have just our little classes left and you're done" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Faculty who cared and were compassionate produced empowerment and mutual respect. One participant reflected on his progress of grade achievements with the help of his instructors, and said "it shows that I am actually progressing. That all my efforts, my hard work weren't for nothing, aren't for nothing and that I am actually getting doing something with me life" (Participant 8,

personal communication, January 27, 2017). Counselors who provided guidance, advise, and continual reinforcements assisted with navigating the college programming and successful completion. One participant shared that he "felt like I had an insight…I could ask somebody [his counselor] something and it was going to be just an answer" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017). Also, the ability to engage with intentional connecting points such as tutorial services, library study spaces, and on-campus job placement were highlighted by a number of the Latino male student participants.

Theme 6: More supportive feedback needed. The sixth theme to emerge was the need for supportive feedback from the community college to counter the many challenges these Latino male students faced in their daily lives. Self-motivation was a large part of the Latino male student participants' success. One participant stated that he was the only one that could make the decision to succeed, "I try to listen to myself, I feel like I have a good judgment with things…I try to give myself some room to change my ways" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant spoke of new friends sharing their childhood experiences, finding similarities in family and culture, identifying the need to pursue and achieve in life, and wanting to make their parents proud as highly motivational. A third participant spoke to the hunger for good information amongst his classmates as they sought advice, "Go over there and talk to the information desk and they'll tell you. They'll probably point you to the right direction" (Participant 9, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and the ability to receive confirmation that one is a good source of information, as he found it "very motivational to know that at least one person respects you" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Supportive feedback was exhibited by faculty and counselors when connections were made. Encouragement and support was given when "professors would pull me aside just to talk

and ask how I'm doing" (Participant 6, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Three of the participants highlighted connections and affirms by counselors or advisors who made inquiries such as "so how is your grades going…are you handling everything, are you using the resources…learning center, do you need help, do we need to find you a tutor and she is very on top of things…you know someone's keeping count on you" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Overall, "the college does help you if you really, really ready to go" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

Theme 7: Be your best advocate. The seventh theme to emerge was the need for Latino male students to find their voice in the educational journey, in order to advocate for their needs and find support in their educational pursuits. Through the advice the Latino male student participants would provide other Latinos were the sentiments of do it, it will be worth it. One participant wanted to encourage other Latino male students by saying "don't let other people get in your way. I'm sure your family does mean the best but at the same time you have to let them know this is what I want to do in life. I'll still be there to support you, but I'm doing what I want not what you want. I would say that that's the big thing because they end up having to leave to support their families" (Participant 5, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant stated "don't let them define who you are. Pursue what you want in life…pursue a future that is meaningful to not only you but to your families, to your parents or your siblings, everyone around you. Take your future into your own hands." (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Yet another participant stated that Latino male students need to "ignore all the negative that comes your way because eventually those who think negative are going to fall and trip on their own negativity while you will overcome them with your positivity. Stay driven. Stay gritty. Just don't give up" (Participant 6, personal communication, January 27,

2017). The bottom line is that the student must make a stand for being a student and the best advocate they can be for themselves; they must find self-resiliency along their educational journey. As one participant put it "no one else is going to do it for you. They can show you the right direction, but they are not going to steer you" (Participant 2, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

In addition, positive and engaged institutional representatives can provide the mutual respect that Latino male students crave and the life applicability to the college instruction that begins to connect academia with real-world scenarios. As one participant put it "that is a thing that a lot of Latinos don't really have, parents that actually went to school. They don't know how it works and they don't really have all the resources" (Participant 10, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Therefore, five of the participants highlighted the need for institutional representatives to keep a positive attitude and work to generate that spark of passion on the inside of your students. One participant encouraged college personnel to "walk out around the campus. Talk to them [students] when they talk to you. Participate in some of their campus events…because when you get to know students it makes it a lot easier for both parties to communicate and get to know how it is done" (Participant 6, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Another participant stated getting to know "the student a bit more on the personal level would allow them [college personnel] to get a better understanding of their [Latino male students] goals or obstacles in life, which would help them in giving better advice" (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Lastly, five participants stated the need for more awareness of college resources or processes such as withdrawing from courses with a *W*, supplemental instruction, tutoring, comprehensive education plans, and department

programs. Recommendations to accomplish this information sharing included more advertising through display boards or classroom presentations.

Finally, connections between the classroom experience and the workplace environment are needed. Recommendations included "go out to the quad and they [college personnel] show off what their department has to offer, it helps…it gives them [students an] idea of what the degree has to offer…I could see myself doing that" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017). In addition, being more aware of career opportunities allows for connections to the curriculum with occupational options. As one participant put it "I see all this at work, I am not going to learn something that is old, something that is outdated, they are teaching you what is currently used and it makes you think you know okay…I could do this" (Participant 11, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the data analysis and results process of this phenomenological research study. A review of the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, role of the researcher, as well as the description of the sample method and procedure were presented. Then the methodology and analysis were explained through an organizational overview; highlights of familial, cultural, and social foundations for Latino male students; the three engagement perspectives of behavior, emotion, and cognition; and the methodological strategies of the research study. The coding and thematic procedures were then outlined as well as the findings and presentation of the data.

Chapter 4 highlighted the seven themes as a lack of preparation for the community college experience, the need to persist throughout the journey, discovering the pursuit of higher education and application of knowledge in the workforce, that there were several key influencers in the Latino male student's life, there is a growing process of turning into a successful student

that takes time and practice, supportive feedback is necessary, and students must be their own best advocate. Each theme was presented with meaning statements from the Latino male student participants as a clustering of ideas around a common experience. Chapter 5 now provides discussion and conclusions drawn from the phenomenon within this research study.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Discussion

Latino male student input was provided and presented for review in the Chapter 4. The seven themes that were highlighted include: (a) the lack of preparation for the community college experience, (b) the need to persist throughout the journey, (c) discovering the pursuit of higher education and application of knowledge in the workforce, (d) several key influencers in the Latino male student's life, (e) the growth experience of a scholar, (f) the supportive feedback necessary for completion of educational goals attainment, and (g) student advocacy. In order to maximize student success, educational practitioners must understand what drives student engagement and then develop strategies that work to better engage students.

Introduction to Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter begins with a brief review of the summary of the results, then a discussion of the results, and review of the results in light of the current literature in order to determine meaning or the essence of the phenomenon as well as add personal insight, interpretation, and connections between what it means to the community of practice, how it informs the literature, and how it adds confirmation or new knowledge to the community of scholars. Then the limitations of the research study are presented with recommendations for further study. Finally, implication of the results for application in practice, policy recommendations, and further advancement of student engagement theory are presented.

Summary of the Results

Community colleges have the unique opportunity to provide access and success for Latino male students pursuing their educational goals within higher education. Once Latino students enter the community college system, engagement with instruction and supportive services that assist students with persistence through to completion of their educational goals were critical. Institutions of higher education that are culturally sensitive and relevant to Latino

male students can more successfully support the Latino male student's aspirations, thus aligning with the Latino male students' needs and providing programming that leads to student success.

Research question. The research question for this phenomenological study is: How do Latino male students describe their educational experience within the community college system? The concepts of student persistence through to completion were explored through this phenomenological research study, in order to understand directly from the Latino male students' experience what influences and engagement perspectives they have regarding the community college system. The focus of inquiry was based on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives that supported or hindered the participants' community college experience. Through the phenomenological interview process, non-leading questions were asked for emerging signs, patterns, or themes that developed the essence of the experiences by these Latino male students.

Research theories. The conceptual framework chosen for this research study is one focused on social psychological theory of Latino male students, with a strong commitment to identifying educational structures and designs that support persistence, completion, and overall success. Theories about culture, involvement, and engagement provide the lenses through which observation of student success for the Latino male student occurs. In isolation, these foci were far less significant than when examined together. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006), "at the intersection of student behaviors and institutional conditions is *student engagement*" (p. 8). Exploration of familial, cultural, and social contexts of the Latino male student allow for deeper insights into the challenges and barriers that confront students at the community college level and their sense of engagement within the institution. Bush, Bush, and Wilcoxson (2009), Freeman and Huggans (2009), Harper (2009), Harris and Wood (2014a), and

Ray, Carly, and Brown (2009) emphasis the need for institutions of higher education to "be proactive in designing and implementing effective programs, services, policies, and practices that meet students' needs and leverage students' assets" (as cited by Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 180). In addition, Wood and Vasquez Urias (2012) found that "African American, Hispanic, and Native American men who attended community colleges reported significantly higher levels of academic integration and greater levels of satisfaction with their major or course of study, quality of education, and the worth of their education" (as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 180), compared with men of color who attended private college, university, or for-profit educational institution.

Research significance. This research can assist educational practitioners with better understanding the role of gender when promoting equitable outcomes for Latinos (Davis, 2010; Harper, 2004; Harper & Harris, 2010), targeting input from the Latino student voice (Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015; Zurita, 2004); soliciting familial, cultural, and social influences (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Nuñez, 2011; Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Tinto 1993); and behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement perspectives (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004) that assist with educational goal attainment. These findings can serve to better inform educational practitioners of the supportive services, classroom pedagogies, and on- and off-campus spaces that propel Latino male students toward successful outcomes in their educational journey (Guiffrida, 2006; Williams, 2014).

Specifically, this study explored the vanishing Latino male syndrome (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). As enrollments for minority students continues to grow in higher education, the persistence and completion data for Latino male students remains stagnant and therefore, the gap continues to increase. This research can assist educational practitioners with understanding the

role of gender when promoting equitable outcomes for Latinos, targeting input from the Latino student voice (Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015; Zurita, 2004) as it relates to persistence and completion outcomes for Latino male students. In addition to gender, ethnicity may play a key role in predispositions toward the community college experience. Pre-college circumstances such as academic rigor in high school, educational background and support from family members, financial aid, and socioeconomic status were critical to historically underrepresented students. Lastly, signs or patterns of perception from Latino male students such as behavior, emotion, or cognitive engagement with family dynamics, working status, entrance timing, and multi-institutional attendance that impact student engagement and success (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Freeman & Huggans, 2009; Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, Brock, & Orr, 2010; Jimenez-Silva, Jimenez Hernandez, Luevanos, Jimenez, & Jimenez, 2009).

Seminal literature synopsis. There is a need for educators to grapple with issues of equity as they relate to engagement patterns of Latinos entering institutions of higher education. According to the United States Department of Education (2016), 71.3% of Latino males have their initial postsecondary experiences in community colleges, serving "as a critical and primary pathway into postsecondary education for these men (Bush & Bush, 2010)" (as cited in Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 512). Therefore, community colleges are well positioned as gateways to various educational goals, with numerous possibilities regarding upward mobility and economic prosperity for students regardless of their age, race, or socioeconomic background. That being said, according to the Digest of Education Statistics (2016), only "14.6% of Latino [males]…graduated from a community college in 3 years" (as cited in Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 175). The literature suggests a number of disagreements related to Latino male students as they

attempt to integrate themselves within the educational institution, acquiring instructional and supportive services that aid them in their educational aspirations, and change their economic positioning (Campa, 2010; Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Kahu, 2013; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; O'Brien, Mars, & Eccleston, 2011; Perna, 2005). In addition, the need for transparent, structured programming that supports student success and transitions into the workforce are essential (Van Noy, Trimble, Jenkins, Barnett, & Wachen, 2016).

The vanishing Latino male syndrome. According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009; 2011) and Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, and Rodriguez (2015), further analysis regarding the vanishing Latino male syndrome is needed in order to provide a better understanding of the role of gender in promoting equitable outcomes. As enrollments for minority students continues to grow in higher education, literature regarding retention, persistence, and completion data for Latino male students remains limited. Some research suggested that "psychological outcomes such as satisfaction, sense of belonging, stereotypes, degree utility (the value students place on their academic endeavors), and academic focus (also referred to as action control) lead to enhance persistence (Perrakis, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012; Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012; Wood & Hilton, 2012a)" (as cited in Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 513). However, in order to effectively understand the Latino male students' perspective, access and input from this student population is needed to inform educational practitioners of student success strategies and outcomes for this target population. The last thing needed in higher education is to lose this ever-increasing segment of the population (Banchero, 2010). Attempts to find the reasoning behind this vanishing population of students before they fully disappear from the higher education spectrum is paramount.

***Latino student voice*.** Latino male students must have an opportunity to voice their experience (Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015; Zurita, 2004) at the community college level. In order to understand cultural perspectives and influences (Tinto, 1993) of Latino male students as well as their patterns of persistence and completion habits, educators need to become more aware of engagement signs. Institution of higher education design, structure, supportive services, and classroom pedagogies need to be informed by this type of understanding in order to drive Latino students toward successful outcomes and educational goal attainment (Guiffrida, 2006; Williams, 2014).

***Familial, cultural, and social foundations*.** Often there were linkages between Latino students' academic experiences and performance that were directly associated with their familial and cultural upbringing as well as perspectives of education and workplace aspirations (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Mason, 2008; Nuñez, 2011; Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Wood, 2012b; Wood, Hilton, & Lewis, 2011). Cultural or familial background in higher education can have detrimental outcomes if external influences were unable to support Latino male students, such as guidance in the overall higher education experience if a first-generation student or the feeling of cultural dissonance and the ability to assimilate to the institution's culture of learning (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005; Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu & Rodriguez, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016a; 2016b), the majority of high school students expect to enroll in some form of higher education, however only 15.8% of Latino male students followed through with this commitment in 2013.

Student engagement. A large number of student engagement studies were conducted from a quantitative perspective with national research data sets that do not always breakdown race or ethnicity at a level that provides understanding for the Latino male student (Kuh, 2000;

Kuh, 2000/2001; Kuh, 2001a; Kuh 2001b; Kuh, 2002; Kuh, 2003; Kuh, 2005a; Kuh, 2005b; Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2008b; Kuh, 2008c; Kuh & Love, 2000). In addition, the qualitative research regarding student involvement and engagement has predominately been at the 4-year college or university level of higher education; with limited community college or Latino male students' focus (Astin, 1996; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Tinto, 1993). Therefore, this pheonomenological research completed at the community college level examines the transformation of Latino male students with engagement from behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), and then link these findings to persistence and completion outcomes that lead to student success or educational goal attainment.

Three engagement perspectives. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), there are three engagement perspectives that are critical to the make-up of a student's identity and life experience: (a) behavior, (b) emotion, and (c) cognition. Behavioral engagement has to do with student conduct or being on-task. Emotional engagement is focused on attitudes as well as interests and values (Palacios, 2014; Wood, 2014). Cognitive engagement emphasizes motivational goals and self-discipline as it relates to the learning environment (Boekarts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Zimmerman, 1990). Student engagement continues to evolve as a concept in higher education, with the potential for structural systems and design to be implemented that support student success (Connell, 1990; Finn & Rock, 1997).

Behavior. Behavioral engagement can be defined in three ways (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 62). First, positive conduct such as adhering to classroom norms or rules as well as an absence of disruptive behaviors (Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl, 1995; Finn & Rock, 1997). Second, involvement in the learning process and execution of academic tasks with a focus on persistence through efforts put forth, the asking questions, or contribution within a class

discussion (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Finn et al., 1995; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Third, participation in school activities such as clubs, sports, study groups, or the student body association (Finn, 1993; Finn et al., 1995; Johnson et al., 2007; Kahu, 2013).

Emotion. Emotional engagement can be defined as student reactions within the classroom setting, including: boredom, and sadness as well as interest and happiness (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Some researchers have explored emotional engagement through the measurement of emotional reactions to the institution of education or faculty (Lee & Smith, 1995; Stipek, 2002). Some researchers have conceptualized emotional engagement as an element of identification with the institution (Tinto, 1993; Voelkl, 1997). Finn (1993), Johnson et al. (2007), and Kahu (2013) identified a sense of belonging or the feeling of being important to the institution as key to the sense of value or an appreciation for the successful outcomes a student is producing for the institution. Eccles-Parsons et al. (1983) described "four components of value: *interest* (enjoyment of the activity), *attainment value* (importance of doing well on the task for confirming aspects of one's self-schema), *utility value/importance* (importance of the task for future goals), and *cost* (negative aspects of engaging in the task)" (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 63). In addition, Palacios (2014) suggests that "the more validating experiences are given to men by faculty, specifically when experiencing high stress levels, the more likely a higher value of degree utility will be reported…specifically, the greater men perceived that school was a worthwhile endeavor; the more likely they were to persist" (pp. 165–166). Lastly, Csikzentmihalyi (1988) defines flow as "a subjective state of complete involvement, whereby individuals are so involved in an activity that they lose awareness of time and space" (as cited in Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p.

63). This definition of flow provides a depiction of an individual who is highly emotional engaged.

***Cognition*.** Cognitive engagement focuses on the investment of learning, and stems from the literature regarding learning and instruction through self-regulation or being strategic in an individual's educational approach (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). One set of cognitive engagement definitions emphasizes the psychological investment to learning, with an interest in going beyond the established expectations and a preference toward challenges embedded in the curriculum (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn (1992). For example, Connell and Wellborn (1991) conceptualized cognitive engagement to include "flexibility in problem solving, preference for hard work, and positive coping in the face of failure" (as cited in Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 63). In addition, McCrae and Costa (1997) believed "that people who are high in openness to experience actively seek out new and varied experiences" (p. 839); generating an openness to new and different experiences that positively associate with characteristics of curiosity, growth, cognition, educational attainment, and intelligence. Openness to these types of experiences can result in greater academic achievement and job performance (Connelly & Ones 2010; Poropat, 2009). Another set of cognitive engagement definitions focus on an inner quality and investment in the psychology of learning. For example, Newmann et al. (1992) defined cognitive engagement as the "student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, mastering, the knowledge, skills or crafts that the academic work is intended to promote" (p. 12).

Methodology. Phenomenology is understanding the essence of the experience, typically drawing from philosophy, psychology, and education (Creswell, 2013). The primary focus in phenomenology is the study of individuals who share similar experiences, and then analyzing

data for significant statements, meaning units, and the description of the essence of these experiences. In addition, as a qualitative research study, member checking by the Latino male student participants was utilized to provide feedback loops in the interview process in order to provide validity through credibility (trustworthiness) and dependability (reliability). Also, the Latino male student participants provide the necessary evidence to present dependable data in validating the themes and offering their comments, feedback, and revisions regarding the data collected.

Summary of the findings. There were seven themes that emerged from the 12 participant interviews. The discussions were around each participant's story of how they engaged with the community college system, their definitions of persistence and student success, influences that supported or distracted them while in their community college experience (e.g., family, culture, and/or society), their engagement or disengagement experiences (e.g., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perspectives), supportive or disruptive feedback received in college, and recommendations, suggestions, or advice for other Latino male students or college personnel attempting to support student success. The responses were grouped into the following seven themes:

***Theme 1: Lack of Preparation*.** The majority of the Latino male student participants lacked preparation or options when it came to choosing a college. "I didn't prepare in high school to go to the university, so I ended up going to community college" (Participant 10, personal communication, January 27, 2017). This theme of lack in preparation arose primarily through responses regarding focus as well as academic, financial, or emotional readiness to pursue their educational goals at the community college level.

***Theme 2: Persistence*.** The majority of the Latino male student participants commented that they sought a better life or something different than what they grew up experiencing. My brother "motivated me to finish college and make something of myself, make my parents proud. Let them know that they did a good job raising us. That you did a good choice–you made a choice by coming over here [from Mexico], giving us a better life" (Participant 8, personal communication, January 27, 2017). This theme highlighted the need to keep going despite the odds and never give up on their educational goals.

***Theme 3: Pursuit of knowledge and real-life application*.** The majority of the Latino male student participants wanted to understand their field of study and experience direct application opportunities related to real-life or the workplace environment. "I think the more they [students] connect to the things that they are doing, that leads to success…if you love knowledge and know what to expect, and you have already done everything in the past [in the classroom setting] then I think you have more of a fighting chance" (Participant 3, personal communication, January 27, 2017). This theme of knowledge and application brought forth satisfaction and confidence in the Latino male student participants.

***Theme 4: Influences matter*.** The majority of the Latino male student participants spoke about their family and culture as key influencers in the support or distractions experienced through their community college journey. While many of the male Latino students had family members encouraging them to pursue their educational goals, the pull toward family responsibilities or cultural expectations were strong. Once in the community college system, counselors, teachers, and peers were key contributors to persistence and completion efforts. Most of the male Latino students shared the sense of developing a learning environment that

became a supportive community, both from other college students as well as community college personnel.

Theme 5: Becoming a successful student. The majority of the Latino male student participants experienced significant transformational experiences in their community college journey. One participant shared, "I never really learned how to learn correctly" (Participant 12, personal communication, February 4, 2017), but each of the participants shared how throughout their community college experience they were able to transition into a community college student. This theme of learning from not only a cognitive perspective, but emotional and behavioral perspectives as well, were critical to their student success.

Theme 6: More supportive feedback needed. The majority of the Latino male student participants were faced with many challenges in their lives throughout the community college experience. In order to preserver, they had to identify their supporters and seek out people to encourage and motivate them along the way toward their educational goals. Feedback such as "You are doing a good job, just keep on doing it" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017) were very critical for Latino male students to hear, encouraging them to continue to persevere.

Theme 7: Be your best advocate. The majority of the Latino male student participants hoped to encourage other Latino male students to believe in themselves, persevere, and not be afraid as well as advise them to make a plan, stay focused, and ask questions. When "everybody was in agreement that this [college] was a focus and a priority" (Participant 4, personal communication, January 27, 2017), persistence and completion became a higher priority. However, even with the lack of support from family or friends, one participant shared that he tried "to listen to myself, I feel like I have a good judgment with things…I try to give myself

some room to change my ways" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 27, 2017) and become the student he knew he could be. This theme of advocating for your own needs as a student, does not come naturally for most Latino male students.

Discussion of the Results

The aim of this study was to examine the engagement patterns among Latino male students completing their educational goals at the community college level. The exploration of both familial, cultural, and social influences as well as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives informed their engagement patterns. It is commendable that these Latino male students wanted to be in school and desired to create change for themselves despite the variety of challenges faced throughout their community college journey.

Lack of preparation. Two out of five Latino students come from families whose parents have less than a high school education compared to only one out of five White students (Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005). First-generation college student priorities regarding education are (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 21):

> More heavily influenced by the nature and amount of financial aid awards, perceptions of the amount of homework required, and being able to live at home and to work while going to school. They are also more likely to delay enrollment after high school, attend 2-year institutions, attend part time and work full time, and live off campus, all of which contribute to their being less likely to get involved with campus organizations and to have more difficulty adjusting to college. (Choy, 2001; Pascarella, Wolniak, Cruce, & Blaich., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996; Terenzini et al., 1994; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004; Warburton, Bugarin, & Nuñez, 2001)

On top of these priority areas, Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998), Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling (1996), and York-Anderson and Bowman (1991) all point toward first-generation students having "less well developed time management and other personal skills, less family and social support for attending college, less knowledge about higher education, and less experience navigating bureaucratic institutions" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006, p. 21).

This research study brought forth a number of issues facing first-generation college students, with nine of the 12 participants being the first family member to attend college, and all 12 being the first to complete their educational goals. However, the level of preparation for community college work was well below average engagement according to these participants, with issues of focus and direction as well as academic, financial, or emotional readiness to pursue one's educational goals. Much of the student success was a combination of key influencers from both family and peers at the initial onset of college entry, and then later the counselor and faculty support that sustained efforts throughout the community college experience. Lastly, each of the Latino male student participants expressed their version of a life transformation as they found their footing in the community college experience, moving from one of son, brother, nephew, or cousin within a collectivist culture to one of participant in higher learning, scholar, and graduate.

Persistence. Current educational practices and policies that facilitate the cultivation of relationships between Latino male students and their peers is significant in persistence and completion for Latino male students. According to Feldman and Newcomb (1969), "peer groups are an important influence on student persistence and can help students gain independence, offer emotional support, provide opportunities for cross-culture interactions, and offer validation outside of academics" (as cited in Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015, p. 164).

Furthermore, in- and out-of-class relational experiences were crucial to the overall educational experience of Latino male students. The networks of people that Latino male students encounter at the community college level were vital to their overall experience within the institution of higher education.

This research study revealed that as the Latino male student participants pursued knowledge, their ability to develop and cultivate relationships with their peers became a crucial step toward success in their educational journey. First-year seminars and experiences emphasizing critical inquiry and collaborative learning that allow students to create a solid foundation for academic study. Group formation to review course readings, work on assignments, and develop common intellectual experiences within a learning environment where a sense of community was established was common among the Latino male student participants as they developed a network of peers. These learning communities allowed the Latino male students to learn and grapple with real-world scenarios through collaboration on assignments and projects (Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014; Waiwaiole, Bohlig, & Massey, 2016; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Within this safe environment, the Latino male students had the ability to deploy problem-solving and team-building skills while developing an appreciation for many different perspectives from their peers. Through the cultivation of these relationships, Latino male students gained exposure to different cultures, life experiences, and a worldview of others. In addition, the experiential learning experience with community partners allowed these Latino male students to apply their learning in a real-world context and set them up for internship opportunities and/or job placement.

Pursuit of knowledge and real-life application. According to Heys and Wawrzynski (2013) "engaging men as peer educators is a promising practice that 'puts men in an ideal

context for involvement' (p. 201) and research suggests that college men grow significantly from this experience in learning domains such as cognitive complexity, intrapersonal development, and interpersonal development" (as cited in Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015, p. 174). In addition, interacting with faculty and staff positively impacts persistence as well as a number of other measures of student success. Therefore, a student's efforts and level of engagement in educationally purposeful activities can have a cumulative effect on their ability to continue through the duration of any difficult situation in the community college experience and ultimately persist until they attain their educational goals.

This research study showed the need for development and offering of more participatory engagement opportunities for Latino male students. The most discussed source of proactive participation was the ability for Latino male students to find work experiences in association with the institution through Federal Work Study positions, jobs on-campus such as tutoring, or internship placements. Latino male student participants frequently discussed the difficulties they experienced with managing their 20–40 hours of work with their school schedules. One of the participants was employed as tutor and one was a classified employee on campus; both spoke highly of the experience, feeling that their needs for on-campus involvement and a steady income were both met. These two Latino male students also credited their on-campus employment to assisting them with staying focused on their studies. Several of the Latino male student participants stated that campus involvement was not a possibility because of their work commitments; on-campus employment tends to be more flexible and would allow these students to modify their schedules in order to be more involved. Unfortunately, on-campus employment generally pays less than off-campus work and may not meet the needs of all Latino male students.

In addition, the intentional design of libraries, cafeterias and coffee shops, or outdoor spaces for communication were highlighted as key locations for participation and collaboration to take place in teams, groups, or as a community of practice. The accessibility and close proximity of such locations is critical for Latino male students to maximize their time efficiently at breaks or lunch time. In addition, institutions of higher education could play a role in encouraging Latino male students to engage in these types of activities by tying classroom credit to participation in a study group, supplemental instruction, or tutorial services in order to expose them to the resources available

Influences matter. Tinto (1975) believed that "the quality of relationships within the family and the interest and expectations parents have for their children's education" (p. 100) are crucial to students' educational attainment and persistence in college. Parental advice, praise, and expressed interest in their student's college experience often demonstrate a stronger level of long-term persistence. High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) points out that students who had a male family member completed college, specifically their fathers, were three times more likely to declare a college degree as their educational goal (McCarthy & Kuh, 2006).

This research study highlighted parental expectations of these Latino male students were influential in their ability to attend college. It was evident that when a Latino male student participant had an older male figure that had obtained some community college experience, they utilized this as a springboard of encouragement and motivation. However, more often than not, if the opportunity to pursue a community college level education was never given to either of the parental figures, there was often a sense of hope for the pursuit of higher education in order to provide a foundational legacy for generations to come. Even more important was the support specifically received by female figures in these Latino male students' lives through their

perseverance and struggles during their community college journey. Seven of the participants attributed key support from a female figure in their life, primarily their mother, but others of note included an oldest sister, girlfriends, or wife. Only three of the participants attributed key support from a male figure in their life, primarily their father, but others of note included an uncle, brother, sons, high school teacher, and co-workers. This was interesting in that many of the male figures in the Latino male students' lives had not been afforded or supported to pursue higher education, demonstrating the lack of role models and cultural influences that encourage Latino males to pursue their educational goals.

Becoming a successful student. As institutions of higher education continue to strive for successful completion outcomes regarding Latino male students, they often fall short (Castillo et al., 2006; Fry & Lopez, 2012; Llagas & Snyder, 2003). There appears to be a mismatch between the student's family culture and the institution of higher education culture–known as *cultural mismatch*–linked to academic difficulties found among Latino male students (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Foster, Lewis, & Onafowora, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Researchers have used the idea of cultural mismatch to help explain the dynamics with ethnic minority student success or failure; finding that students who feel culturally aligned with their institution of higher education were more motivated (Hudley & Daoud, 2008) and more academically successful (Warzon & Ginsburg-Block, 2008).

This research study uncovered a profound sense of transformation that was difficult for most of the Latino male student participants to articulate. The majority of the Latino male student participants, physically and/or emotionally, removed themselves from their past lives in order to embrace their experience as a community college student and engage with their academic institution to the level necessary for graduation to occur. Most of the Latino male

students had discovered cognitive skills such as focus during class, reading textbooks and reviewing materials for their courses, note taking, skim reading, discussions with peers, asking questions in class, utilizing online tools, attending faculty office hours, and study locations that fit their particular learning needs in order to be successful. However, more profound was the need to behaviorally and emotionally connect with their institution of higher education in order to succeed. The majority of the participants found that through creating a group of like-minded individuals through either their student peers or through the support of counselors and faculty (Storlie, Moreno, & Agahe Portman, 2014), that they were able to build community and design an educational environment that provide support and assistance sufficient for persistence and completion of their educational goals.

More supportive feedback needed. With a large number of disruptive feedback opportunities in the lives of Latino male students, it is critical that support feedback is provided to counter the challenges faced on a daily basis. Student validation through enabling, confirming, and supporting students inside and outside of the classroom (Rendón, 1994a) is critical for the student success. As a collectivist culture, Latino family support is crucial to ensuring that their Latino male students succeed academically, especially given the unique aspects of the community college setting and issues surrounding masculinity, work, and family. It is important that Latino male students and their families are aware of the realities of pursuing a higher education (e.g., college is not easy, it requires time and energy, and it is challenging). Institutional agents must provide an open platform to help Latino male students and their families recognize the familial sacrifices that are necessary to earn a college degree. Such honesty should include the fact that the benefits of a community college certificate or degree are not immediate, but that completion offers a path to better financial opportunities in the long run.

Latino male students, and their family members, must recognize that the path towards a college degree presents challenges or areas of opportunity with the right perspective. Despite financial and personal responsibilities for student success, Latino male students must also know that earning their educational goals are within their grasp. Thus, their community college experience is an exercise in learning how to balance college coursework with outside obligations.

This research study identified a significant need for Latino male student participants pursuing their educational goals–ongoing feedback from supporters willing to encourage, providing access and guidance in their educational journey. Latino males were culturally influenced by their traditional collectivist culture. College and educational goals impact the entire family, and therefore were often a family commitment in order to achieve success. Institutional representatives can assist Latino male students with explicit discussions about the realities and expectations of the community college experience, intrusive student services and resource accessibility, and how to cope with successes and failures throughout the journey. Since Latino males were disinclined to ask for help or admit imminent failure, strategies such as creating safe spaces for discussion and strategic advising can equip Latino male students with the necessary skills and confidence to respond to obstacles or challenges in the academic pursuits constructively (Bukoski & Hatch, 2016). Ultimately, practitioners should recognize the complexity of internal masculinity conflicts that can exist within the varied experiences of Latino male students in community colleges, conflicts that can serve to either marginalize them further from their educational goals or serve as a source of motivation to fulfill those goals.

Be your best advocate. Community colleges can encourage Latino male students to advocate for themselves through intrusive services such as counseling, academic probation, or culturally designed programming. In addition, creating opportunities for bonding with other

Latino male students can occur by hosting counselor or faculty-led social groups. These on-campus social groups would allow Latino male students to connect with others who have similar academic goals, possibly with a male mentor as the campus advisor. Many Latino male student participants commented on the difficulty of finding a place of safety between their home lives and their role as a college student. By facilitating socialization amongst Latino male students, a safe haven becomes available where they can express their frustration, challenges, or disappointments and recharge their motivation to succeed in the academic setting where they were engaged. Seeing counselors and faculty members dedicating their time and energies to Latino male successes would go far in improving the relationship of students and institutional representatives. Involving counseling members would promote the visibility of counseling services that Latino male students have traditional underutilized, by providing them an opportunity to meet in a non-academic setting, making the bridge to accessing the counseling staff for academic and supportive services in the future as issues arise or program scheduling support is needed.

This research study expressed a major challenge for Latino male student participants pursuing their educational goals–their ability or predisposition to seeking help from institutional representatives such as counselors and faculty. Latino males were culturally influenced to be tough and independent. Therefore, the tendency to try and figure things out on their own is highly engrained in their mindset. As this behavior began to modify throughout their community college experience and asking questions as well as seeking advice occurred in pursuit of their educational goals, the Latino male students had less struggles and more clarity in their experiences. In addition, as institutions of higher education it is imperative that supportive services transition from a help or assist driven for Latino male students–a deficit model–to one

that emphasizes intrusive support and services for all students. In doing so, this encourages Latino males to take advantage of resources that enhance the way they experience the community college system (Harper, 2014) without feeling singled out or allowing for information dissemination without the need to ask or feel embarrassed or inadequate. Anti-deficit achievement models put forth a more positive perspective of Latino male student success by combining pre-college socialization and readiness (e.g., familial factors, K–12 preparation, and out-of-school experiences) with college achievement both inside and outside of the classroom (e.g., classroom interactions, out-of-class activities, and external opportunities), and persistence through to completion.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

If student engagement is to be attained, the understanding of what motivates a student and to what extent behavioral, emotional, and cognitive energy is devoted to the academic experience becomes a key concern (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). As educational practitioners focus on both the pre-college student identity (Zamarripa, Lane, Lerma, & Holin, 2011) and engagement patterns of Latino male students, shifts in perspective and programming can adjust. With the end goal of producing greater numbers of Latino male students experiencing success and obtaining their education goals this is absolutely necessary. In addition, expansion and enhancement of strategies in programming and services that support and engage Latino male students can come to fruition. Lastly, researchers can fine-tune the key attributes that lead to Latino male student engagement and success.

Community of practice. The abovementioned findings and results were significant for educational practitioners who work with Latino male students, and who want to understand what is necessary to engage these students in order to persist through to completion of their

educational goals. While the community college system cannot control a number of external environmental stress factors for students, assisting Latino male students to view their community college as a place of safety and stability is critical. Community colleges can assist students with retention by providing a welcoming environment, offering encouragement and validation, and limiting unnecessary anxiety or fear of failure. Creating a positive environment for Latino male students can be achieved through proactive outreach and marketing, accessible resources and clear programming, student social groups, and opportunities to gain knowledge with real-life applications. Positive images of accomplished Latino male student alumni showcased throughout campus could also assist students in connecting their educational goals and aspirations to student success; developing a greater level degree utility amongst this student population. Community colleges can further assist Latino male students by providing male-oriented support services and transparent, structured programs with efficient scheduling of courses that supports student success and transitions into the workforce (Van Noy, Trimble, Jenkins, Barnett, & Wachen, 2016). In addition, personal development through social groups can provide students with access to dialogue that can encourage and support them through life's many stressors. This is very important as many community college students manage a wide variety of responsibilities (e.g., student, employee, parent, and caregiver) that compete for both time and attention. Lastly, community college counselors and faculty have a critical role in helping students make decisions with long-term benefits in career planning, life choices, and moments of crisis. These highlights can hopefully increase the academic trajectory of Latino male students, and lead to both persistence and completion of their educational goals.

Relationships to the current literature. Current literature suggests that programs and activities such as first-year seminars, learning communities, service-learning, study abroad, and

other experiences with diversity, internships, and capstone projects promote student engagement and support educational persistence (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008; Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014; Waiwaiole, Bohlig, & Massey, 2016; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). While these high impact practices have historically been utilized more prominently at the 4-year college or university level, community colleges are now more intentionally implementing these strategies to assist students with engagement and perspective transformation into the institution of higher education environment. In addition, Blose (1999) stated that "students tend to adjust their behavior and comply, regardless of their prior academic history, to the academic expectations of the environment" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006, p. 67) and Rendón (1995; 1999) "found that 'validation'–an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by faculty and other agents of socialization in and out of the classroom–fosters student success, particularly for historically underserved students" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006, p. 67). Both of these behavior observations by Blose and Rendón were evident in the community college experiences of the research participants. Furthermore, "parents' expectations are a strong direct indicator of Latino [students']…predispositions for college…[and] parent and peers seem to influence both student enrollment (Perna & Titus, 2005) and persistence decisions (Bank, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990)" (as sited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 22). This emotional perspective was evident in the persistence and completion of the research participants. Finally, Astin (1984) pointed out that "attending lectures, doing reading assignments, and working in the library" (p. 520) as well as having resources brought together to support student development such as physical facilities like classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and computer labs; human resources including faculty members, counselors, and support staff; and fiscal resources (e.g., financial aid, endowments, grants, on-campus jobs) allowed students to be well positioned to thrive throughout

their educational journey. This cognitive perspective of in- and outside of institutional facilities was evident in the success of the research participants.

In order to ensure that the environment is welcoming and culturally appropriate, community college need to consider providing: a strong and well thought out first-year student experience, high-touch academic supportive services, opportunities for peer interaction and support, and fostering learning that is responsive to student behavior (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). In addition, clear expectations of what it means to be a community college student, an understanding of the processes and procedures for navigating the institution of higher education, the strong recommendation to attend as a full-time student and limit work hours to 15 hours per week or less, and the need for intrusive counseling and support services are critical. Choy (2001), the Institution of Higher Education Policy (2001), Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005a), and Turner (1988) all found that students who worked fifteen or less hours per week were more likely to attend the full year, and that with careful financial planning and a streamlined personal or family operating budget, students could focus, condense their time on task, and lower stress levels while pursuing their educational goals (Santiago, 2011). Also, Harper (2014) has found that most activities that focus on men of color were centered around "providing spaces for community building and leadership development, [but] often missing were opportunities for [men of color] to critically reflect on themselves as men…[by] paying sufficient attention to important (and sometimes conflict-laden) aspects of their masculinities" (Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015, p. 129). Therefore, gender-specific programming needs to include opportunities for critical reflection as well as formal and informal networks such as learning communities and peer support groups as well as faculty mentorship and advocacy allow for developing a sense of belonging, assimilation to student life, and engagement in the

community college experience (Phinney, Torres Campos, Kallemeyn, & Kim, 2011; Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014; Waiwaiole, Bohlig, & Massey, 2016; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Lastly, community colleges must focus on the time it takes to earn a degree–carefully examining low certificate and degree attainment rates as the potential result of unclear pathways, as well as reviewing the number of courses or length of time necessary to complete as potential impediments to student success, including course availability, scheduling, and problems within the advising process. In an effort to eliminate negative ideas, feelings, or values associated with academic anxiety, racial inferiority, or traditional gender roles (Garcia, 2010; O'Neil, 1981; O'Neil, 2008; Rendón, 1994b; Wood, 2014), it is important that these strategies for success are offered to Latino males as part of a college-wide offering, not specifically highlighted for underrepresented Latinos or male students in particular. As Latino male students were able to visualize their educational journey and partake in problem solving activities, develop their work ethic, and identify coping mechanisms through their failures, their success rate and level of persistence greatly increase.

This research study confirmed a number of key areas of focus and direction for student persistence and completion of educational goals to occur. The concern that Attinasi (1989), London (1989), Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998), Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling (1996), and York-Anderson and Bowman (1991) all have pointed out regarding first-generation students having "less well developed time management and other personal skills, less family and social support for attending college, less knowledge about higher education, and less experience navigating bureaucratic institutions" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006, p. 21) was consistent in this research study. Engagement (Kuh, 2006) and persistence were necessary in the pursuit of higher education, in order to obtain student success and attain educational goals. Extracurricular activities (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993) including study groups, fieldtrips, work-based learning

through internships, and real-life application through in- and out-of-classroom experiences offer Latino male students new perspectives on life and career choices. These high-impact activities create a sense of community that were essential to student success, coupled with a comprehensive system of initiatives that support students (Kuh, 2005a; Wang & Grimes, 2001) with culturally and gender-based programming (Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Connell, 1995). Just as Gardenhire-Crooks et al. (2010) found that men of color were reluctant to seek "academic, personal, or financial assistance while in college because they viewed seeking help as contradictory to how they were socialized to express masculinity, notably by exhibiting vigor, independence, and resilience" (as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 179), this research highlighted the inefficiencies of Latino male students reinventing the wheel versus utilizing campus resources when it came to their pursuits of higher education. Latino male student validation through enabling, confirming, and supporting students inside and outside of the classroom (Kahu, 2013; Rendón, 1994a; Palacios, 2014) provided a sense of belonging, higher value of degree utility, and empowerment to these students in pursuit of their educational goals. In addition, Stuart, Rios-Aguilar, and Deil-Amen (2014) stated that "students form their goal commitments through an ongoing process of cost-benefit analysis" (p. 333), therefore redesigning programs and services with a cost reduction and benefit enhancing service messaging would be helpful for Latino male students (D'Amico, Rios-Aguilar, Salas, & González Canché, 2012). Ultimately, earning a community college certificate or "degree is linked to long-term social and economic benefits that [can be] passed on to future generations, enhancing the quality of life of the families of college-educated persons, the communities in which they live, and the larger society. Whereas college was once considered an option for a

relatively small percentage of the adult population, this is no longer the case" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 105).

Community of scholars. This phenomenological research study analyzed attributes such as Latino male students' influences from family, culture, and society as well as community college engagement related to behavior, emotion, and cognitive perspectives. The Latino male student participants provided their perspectives in regards to persistence and completion strategies that lead to student success and educational goal attainment. The participation of Latino male students at the community college level for this study allowed for exploration of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attributes (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), providing understanding regarding persistence and completion outcomes related to student success.

I used qualitative research methods consistent with the literature. The study used, an interview protocol for data collection. A sample size of 12 Latino male student participants were interviewed. I immersed myself in data collection for two weeks, utilizing the strictest of confidentiality procedures and several validity measures through member checking. A phenomenological study analysis using coding of categories and themes was employed.

Limitations

The timing of this phenomenological research study was situated at a difficult juncture in the students' educational process. Data collection from Latino male students who intend to complete their educational goals in the existing semester or within the next semester were at a transitional phase in the educational process that made it difficult to connect and complete the process with several of the participants. While this challenge is unavoidable for the parameters of this research study, a gift of $50 cash did incentivize 11 of the 12 Latino male student participants to complete the full interview, transcript, and individual summary member checking

process. In the future, considerations could be made to include Latino male student experiences in their first-year experience, or throughout different phases in their educational journey, in order to identify additional attributes that impact student engagement or success as well as breaking down the sub-groups within the Latino male student category to specify differences related to foreign born versus Latinos from the United States.

In addition, the methodological limitation of the interview protocol limited the adjustment and changes for deeper exploration of the persistence and completion influences as well as attributes of engagement that surfaced in the Latino male students' educational journey. The use of a mixed method research study could show more linkages between high school preparation and the participants' community college experience as well as grade and course taking patterns that resulted in persistence through to completion. Furthermore, the single community college sampling for the purposes of this research study was a limitation that could be explored further with a larger pool of community colleges or a more diversity mix of rural and urban locations. Finally, while the 12–15 participants were typical in a phenomenological study, the research could reveal more data from a larger sampling of Latino male students or an expansion to all men of color.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

This qualitative study analyzed attributes such as Latino male students' influences from family, culture, and society as well as community college engagement related to behavior, emotion, and cognitive perspectives. The Latino male student participants provided their perspectives in regards to persistence and completion strategies that lead to student success and educational goal attainment. The participation of Latino male students at the community college level for this study allowed for exploration of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attributes

(Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), providing understanding regarding persistence and completion outcomes related to student success.

Membership: Past, present, and future. According to Tinto (1993), students must first separate from their former associations in order to transition into new membership. To assimilate into a higher education environment, students must distance themselves from family and friends (Tinto, 1993) to "*incorporate* or adopt the normative values and behaviors of the new group, or college" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 11). The perspectives established with one's family and community through a student's formative years, and cultural identity prior to entrance in a college setting, were filled with: parental encouragement or discouragement regarding education, support or barriers from friends, and financial planning or lack thereof. These key pre-college perspectives greatly influence persistence and completion outcomes. This research study's exploration of influential attributes and the transformational process of community college on Latino male students were highlighted in Theme 1: Lack of Preparation, Theme 4: Influences Matter, and Theme 5: Becoming a Successful Student.

The research findings suggest community colleges can do more to facilitate Latino male students' preparation for engagement at the community college level by growing awareness of rigid gender roles, exposing positive and negative cultural influences, and establishing expectations of what it means to be a Latino male student in higher education. According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009) and Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, and Rodriguez (2015), the ability of a Latino male students to successfully navigate the complex community college environment is critical to their success. Therefore, such efforts may include supporting or challenging social or cultural notions of masculinity and transforming perceptions of education as a route to future success versus a current time waster. I offer the following recommendations for practice:

designing or redesigning programs and services with Latino males in mind. Designing or redesigning programs and services with Latino males in mind can provide the necessary motivation and support needed to assist Latino male students in being successful. Programs that focus explicitly on the learning and developmental needs of Latino male students can provide meaningful opportunities for Latino males to socialize with other Latino peers and develop purposeful relationships with Latino male faculty and staff. Such efforts were especially important considering that Latino male students tend not to seek assistance and believe that they can figure things out on their own. This success not only establishes them as successful community college students, but follow them well beyond their educational pursuits through to their career prospects, leaving a generational legacy as well as helping to establish a healthy economy with an educated workforce for the region.

Latino male services. According to Kimmel and Messner (2007) as well as Connell (1995), "masculinity is a socially constructed concept. Simply stated, men are socialized or taught, the meanings, values, and behaviors that are associated with masculinity. Moreover, men are rewarded for performing masculinity according to societal expectations, and punished for not doing so" (as cited by Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015, p. 63). Gardenhire-Crooks et al. (2010) found that men of color were reluctant to seek "academic, personal, or financial assistance while in college because they viewed seeking help as contradictory to how they were socialized to express masculinity, notably by exhibiting vigor, independence, and resilience" (as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 179). Harris, Wood, and Newman point out that,

> while on one hand, schooling and academic learning is socially constructed as a feminine activity; on the other hand, popularity and status for men are earned through the accumulation of wealth, physicality, being tough, and being independent. Success in

> college is dependent, in part, on cultivating healthy interpersonal relationships, seeking help when needed for academic and other challenges, and proactively participating in class discussions and activities. Yet, these behaviors are often assumed to be contradictory to the messages about masculinity that are ingrained in men during the early stages of their gender socialization. (2015, p. 65)

Sáenz, Bukoshi, Lu, and Rodriguez (2013) found three primary areas of concern regarding Latino male students: "(a) pride, or machismo, triggers men to admit emotionality only in rigid ways, (b) pride and fear prevent men from seeking academic support, and (c) cultural and familial expectations of getting a job and earning money as a marker of manhood. All serve to 'pull' Latino men away from their studies and make dropping out the easier and more viable option" (p. 82). However, Vasquez Urias and Wood's (2015) research findings challenged this "belief that men, specifically Latino men, do not value their education or are not self-motivated due to their perceptions that school is not a place suitable for males…[and that] their competitive nature to work harder towards accomplishing their goals" (p. 30) was a motivating factor. The fact remains that higher levels of support for Latino male students are needed in order to validate their efforts and presence within the classroom and on campus, in order to eliminate negative ideas, feelings, or values associated with academic anxiety, racial inferiority, or traditional gender roles (O'Neil, 2008; Rendón, 1994b; Rodriguez, 2014; Wood, 2014). This research study's exploration of gender engagement perspectives related to the community college experiences of Latino male students were highlighted in Theme 3: Pursuit of Knowledge and Real-Life Application, Theme 6: More Supportive Feedback Needed, and Theme 7: Be Your Best Advocate.

The research findings suggest community colleges can do more to assist Latino male students in pursuing knowledge, offering culturally sensitive programs and services, and producing the necessary environments that motivate and generate student success. Such efforts may include traditional community college programming as well as short-term, intensive offerings. In addition, community college personnel would do well to rethink the services they provide in order to ensure that Latino male students do not feel their culture or masculinity is compromised or that they were ostracized for their inability to perform well academically (Bukoski & Hatch, 2016; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014). I offer the following recommendations for practice: designing or redesigning Latino male programming from a traditionally auditory experience focused on linguistic academia to one of a more kinesthetic experience focused on high-energy, competitive, learning environments with real-world experiences as well as oral and visual learning modalities emphasizing intrusive services for all students with both counselors as well as faculty (Harper, 2014).

Community college programming has the opportunity to offer high-energy, competitive learning environment with real-world experiences that are culturally sensitive to the Latino male student's need to apply their academics with workplace potential. Cohort enrollment with a pre-determined sequence of courses (Scott-Clayton, 2011) as well as block scheduling to expedite enrollment and the instructional sequencing of courses (Radford, Berkner, Wheeless, & Shepherd, 2010); these are strategies that develop common intellectual experiences and accelerate students through to completion of their educational goals. A well-integrated educational plan that leads to concrete career planning and reaches out to Latino male students and their families, with a traditional collectivist message, placing a strong emphasis on familial bonds and relationships through family Open Houses with tours, information, and onboarding

support as well as current student shadow days to see first-hand the community college experience could be very powerful marketing strategies. In addition, summer bridge programs or utilization of the first 1–2 weeks of the semester to offer financial literacy workshops, guidance or study skills courses, career exploration or industry cluster occupational opportunities, and development of a clear and transparent educational plan prior to starting their educational goal attainment would set up first-time college going students with the tools necessary to navigate through their institution of higher education in a more productive and efficient way. Lastly, regional internships support Latino male student development and application of real-world scenarios coupled with a rigorous, but compact academic regimen of studies, job placement hubs, and coaches that assist with connection efforts to part-time and full-time employment in the student's field of study.

Community college student services have the opportunity to offer intrusive services for all without singling out a particular cohort or group of students. Open houses, orientations, and outreach programs that engage the entire family could be a viable design, reinforcing the positive role of family in the lives of Latino male students. In addition, offering specific Latino male programs such as TRIO programs that specifically hone in the first-year experience and making the necessary assimilation to becoming a successful student, could provide institutions with appropriate safe havens for Latino male students to discuss the importance of being successful in community college and in pursuit of their educational goals. In addition, Latino male student programming could provide them with the necessary support services to address specific behavioral, emotional, or cognitive needs. Through awareness campaigns, ongoing conversations across the campus, and collaboration of both student services and instructional

divisions charged with positively influencing the educational outcomes for Latino male students, the potential to change the trajectory of this underrepresented student population is attainable.

Male responsibilities and student success. Gardenhire-Crooks et al. (2010) as well as Wood and Essien-Wood (2012) highlight "the ways in which men of color in community colleges are challenged by pressures to fulfill the masculine role of breadwinner and the effects it had on their engagement in academics" (as cited in Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015, p. 64). Financial affordability of higher education is a key consideration when determining when and where to pursuing educational opportunities by Latino male students. According to Gardenhire-Crooks et al. (2010), men of color in the community college system "believed it was important to earn money to take care of their families while they were enrolled in college. They recognized that doing so had negative consequences on their academic achievement. Yet, they still felt compelled to prioritize work above school because they saw work as core to their identities as men" (as cited in Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 179). With significant opportunities for financial aid and potential industry sponsorship of books or tuition costs, there were equal financial responsibilities that students and their families must weigh out when entering into such contractual obligations. According to Levant and Kopecky (1996) "Latino men are culturally socialized toward dominance, self-reliance, status achievement, objectifying sexual attitudes, aversion of homosexuality, and avoidance of femininity" (as cited in Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013, p. 85). As a result, Latino male students were more likely drop out, be influenced by peer pressures, or seek financial gain over educational pursuits due to their sense of personal responsibility and obligation to their families (Ingram & Gonzalez-Matthews, 2013; Palacios, 2014). Choy (2001), the Institution of Higher Education Policy (2001), and Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005a) have found that students who work:

> Fifteen or fewer hours were more likely than students who worked more to attend for the full year, suggesting that working more than 15 hours may negatively affect persistence. On-campus, or work-study, employment is more often associated with student success, such working on campus provides a channel of communication to students and helps students use the education system effectively, and also is linked with higher transfer rates for community college students. (as cited in Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 25)

Therefore, perspectives need to be analyzed by each student regarding balance of work obligations versus educational pursuits and the length of time to completion. While financially a student may view working a full-time job necessary to cover their educational costs or support the family, careful financial planning in order to limit financial expenditures and producing a lean personal or family operating budget could result in higher focused, more condensed time on task, and lower stress levels while in pursuit of their educational goals (Santiago, 2011). This research study's exploration of student success and masculine dispositions regarding engagement were highlighted in Theme 2: Persistence.

The research findings suggest community colleges can do more to assist Latino male students with pursuing their educational goals by streamlining programs and services that assist Latino male students with fulfilling their family's financial responsibilities and the opportunities of giving up on their educational goals. Such efforts may include an increase in on-campus job placement opportunities as well as intentional development of networks that support student persistence through to completion. Finding work experiences in association with the institution through Federal Work Study positions, jobs on-campus such as tutoring, or internship placements were critical to Latino male students' ability to financial provide for their families,

with close proximity and/or flexible scheduling that focuses on educational pursuits as a first priority. In addition, formation of support networks with peers willing to review course readings, work on assignments, and develop common intellectual experiences within a learning environment that had the sense of a supportive community was common among the Latino male student participants who succeed. Through the cultivation of these relationships, a network of like-minded people, going through a shared experience, allowed Latino male students to have accountability and support during life challenges and/or trials of the community college journey.

Transferable implications. The participation of Latino male students at the community college level for this research study allows for some transferable implications regarding behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attributes (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), as well as understanding regarding persistence and completion outcomes related to student success. First, students from collectivist cultures need to learn to assimilate into the higher education environment, distancing themselves from family and friends (Tinto, 1993) to "*incorporate* or adopt the normative values and behaviors of the new group, or college" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 11). When this occurs, the collectivist member can start to transition to an individual mindset and begin focusing on becoming a successful student. In addition, considerations for being a breadwinner for the family can then be balanced with the short-term needs to complete their educational goals in order to advance in the workplace environment. Second, "masculinity is a socially constructed concept…[and men are] rewarded for performing masculinity according to societal expectations" (as cited by Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015, p. 63). With institutions of higher education seeing a trend in lower percentages of male enrollment, particularly from men of color, the concepts of masculinity and male persistence strategies need to be taken into consideration when designing or redesigning programs and

services within the community college system (Bukoski & Hatch, 2016; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014; Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, and Rodriguez, 2015). Men must feel empowered to demonstrate their masculinity through socially acceptable meanings, values, and behaviors in an academic environment that tends to be more feminine in nature. By designing high-energy, competitive learning environments with real-world experiences that were culturally sensitive to the Latino male student's needs, or men of color at-large, community college personnel can guide male students through pathways of success in both programs and services offered by the institution of higher education.

Recommendations for Further Research

Subsequent research should continue to focus on solutions that increase persistence and completion rates of Latino male students. With such a limited amount of qualitative research students on men of color, phenomenological studies should continue to examine Latino male student needs through solicitation and advice given directly from the target population, not through traditional methods, reasoning, or logic. The ability to interview more Latino male student participants from a variety of community colleges would have been ideal, but due to time constraints was not feasible.

In addition, the incorporation of a mixed method study would add value to the research study. With a survey questionnaire that asked key questions such as number of hours worked per week, number of hours studied per week, cumulative GPA, number of units taken each semester, number of semesters taken to complete the educational goals, activities that the student was involved in on-campus, among others would have provided a more in-depth interpretation of the findings and possibly influenced the results in a more meaningful way. In addition, incorporating the influence of faith (Jeynes, 1999; Jeynes, 2001; Jeynes, 2015) and hope (Storlie,

Moreno, & Agahe Portman, 2014) as attributes could provide additional understanding for community college administrators, faculty, and staff. Lastly, topics of interest for exploration could include the Latinos' collectivist culture, further questioning around participants not feeling prepared for the community college environment, and additional investigation regarding group dynamics, competitiveness, and the academic mindset of Latino male students that could have enhanced the data findings. Overall student success was hard to define as well, so there is room for further research and development of a conceptual framework around success patterns for Latino male students.

Conclusion

The primary interest of this study is an understanding of the phenomenon of Latino male students' and their community college experience. The literature surrounding this phenomenon is presented in Chapter 2. The methodology and plan for data collection is outlined in Chapter 3. The process of data gathering, analysis, and synthesis is presented in Chapter 4. Finally, the recommendations and suggestions for future research were presented in Chapter 5.

The research question for this phenomenological study was: How do Latino male students describe their educational experience within the community college system? The goal of this research study was to highlight the need for more understanding regarding men, Latino males in particular, and their engagement patterns as they relate to the community college system. The results of this research obtained a greater sense of meaning regarding the Latino male students' experience and understanding their engagement perspectives that allow for persistence and completion of educational goals. In addition, this research study can inform policy and practice at the participating California community college, as results of the study's

attributes were understood and influences as well as engagement perspectives were identified regarding Latino male students.

Key points and significance. In order to set the environment at a community college for success, understanding of family, culture, and social influences is important. In addition, understanding the engagement and disengagement experiences from cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perspectives directly from the target population is key. With Latino male student experiences that demonstrate a minimum level of preparation for community college level studies, the influencing voices of family, K–12 personnel, and peers can provide guidance or have a derailing effect. There is a significant need to have more supportive voices in young Latino male student lives, paving the way for influence, mentorship, encouragement, guidance, and support as they pursue their educational goals. When Latino male students find institutional agents that were willing to "transcend their professional roles to be involved in multiple aspects of their lives" (Museus & Neville, 2012, p. 444), student persistence and completion goes up. In addition, the opportunity to become a scholar is often one of fighting against the odds for Latino male students. However, with a determination to keep going and never give up, Latino male students can become their own best advocate in order to successfully pursue knowledge that can position them for socioeconomic advancement. Community college personnel must come alongside these Latino male students to provide a clear pathway to navigate the institutional system, identify an appropriate career choice and field of study, set forth realistic expectations of what it takes to be a college student, and provide intrusive information and services that avail the resources necessary for empowerment to succeed.

New knowledge and innovation. Community colleges must continue to pursue accountability for their campus climates, being more inclusive, and developing a culture of

collective pursuit of knowledge and real-world application for a wide variety of students. As campus environments continue to transform their environments, a few key areas of focus should be included: (a) community colleges must be a welcoming beckon of light for those who find themselves left in the dark regarding higher education opportunities, (b) community colleges must reflect the diversity of the community they reside in at both the student and personnel levels, (c) engaging Latino male students and their families through academic or socioeconomic advancement messaging that has programs and services to support their educational goals, and (d) develop educational environments of empowerment with appropriate safety nets such as learning communities, ongoing counseling services and supportive services connections, and mentorship through more advanced students and/or faculty for success and support of learning for Latino male students. The ability of Latino male students to persist and complete their educational goals increases as community college transition their services into offerings of that reflect this constituency of students.

Throughout this research study, a number of influences and engagement strategies were explored to provide understanding for the educational practitioner serving Latino male students. Gaining understanding directly from Latino male students and understanding how they engaged in the community college system, is critical to creating more responsive programs and services. In order for Latino male students to persistence through to completion with their educational goals there were influential components at both the familial and cultural levels that were more individual in nature, yet there were cultural and social influences that institutions of higher education can play a role in to support their students. Even more so, there were opportunities to change Latino male student perspectives related to behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as this slate is quite empty when it comes to community college experience and

what it means to be a college student. Without strong guidance, support, and mentorship coming from an institution of education, the success rates of Latino male students continue to be a persistence of the few, versus success of many. This is the opportunity that lies before the educational practitioner at the community college level. I am happy to say yes to this challenge and proud to be a part of such a transformational opportunity for a minority group that is highly significant in the Central Valley of California. I am encouraged with the recommendations to move forward in a productive manner and look forward to working with my likeminded colleagues to pursue models of success for future generations of community college Latino male students.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Topic: Community College Latino Male Student Engagement: A Qualitative Research Study
Date & Time of Interview: _____
Place of Interview: Business Resource Center
Interviewer / Principal Investigator: Becky Barabé
Interviewee: _____

Brief Description of the Overall Research Study:
According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009), "Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline" (p. 54). Despite a steady increase of Latinos enrolling in higher education over the past several decades, persistence and completion rates are not keeping up proportionally with other student population groups (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006). The central question in this phenomenological research study is to understand how Latino male students describe to their educational experience within the community college system. The areas of focus will be areas of the student's life that influence their engagement (family, culture, and/or society) as well as their engagement perspectives (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) that assisted with persistence and completion efforts toward their educational goal(s) and overall student success.

Interview Questions (Part 1):

Tell me the "story" of how you engaged with the community college system.

Tell me about persistence. What does "persistence" mean to you?

Tell me about student success. What does "student success" mean to you?

Tell me about the influences you experienced in your life and how they supported you in your community college experience (e.g., family, culture, and/or society).

Tell me about the influences you experienced in your life and how they distracted you from your community college experience (e.g., family, culture, and/or society).

Brief Explanation of Engagement Perspectives for this Research Study:
According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), there are three engagement perspectives that are critical to the make-up of a student's identity and life experience: (a) behavior, (b) emotion, and (c) cognition. Behavioral engagement has to do with student conduct or being on-task. Emotional engagement is focused on attitudes as well as interests and values (Palacios, 2014; Wood, 2014). Cognitive engagement emphasizes motivational goals and self-discipline as it relates to the learning environment (Boekarts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Zimmerman, 1990). Student engagement continues to evolve as a concept in higher education, with the potential for structural systems and design to be implemented that support student success (Connell, 1990; Finn & Rock, 1997).

Interview Questions (Part 2):

What of the perspectives above have engaged you in your community college experience?

What of the perspectives above have disengaged you in your community college experience?

Tell me about supportive feedback you have received during your community college experience.

Tell me about disruptive feedback you have received during your community college experience.

Tell me about your community college experience in your final stage(s) of completion. What recommendations, suggestions, or advice would you give other Latino male students pursuing their educational goal(s), and/or administration, faculty, or staff supporting student success?

Closing Interview Statement & Follow Up Confirmation:
Thank you for your participation in this interview session. The next steps in this process will be for me to deliver to you this interview's transcription within the next 4 weeks. Then you will have an opportunity to check your input, confirm accuracy, and review. Please provide any comments, feedback, and/or revisions needed regarding the data collected to me at your earliest convenience. In addition, an individual summary will be sent to you for review within the next 8 weeks. Thank you again for your participation, and look forward to hearing back from you on the interview transcript and individual summary feedback over the next 1-2 months.

Appendix B: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association

Digital Signature

Becky Barabé

Name (Typed)

July 28, 2017

Date